

SECONDARY ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES HIRING ALTERNATIVE
CERTIFIED TEACHERS IN TEXAS

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As administrators start to hire more alternative certified teachers in Texas who pursue a career in K–12 education, it becomes important to understand the impact this experience has on teacher quality. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore administrators' beliefs and experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers. The primary research question was: What are alternative certified teachers' strengths? The additional questions of the study were: What are alternative certified teachers' weaknesses? Are administrators satisfied with the alternative certified teachers' performance? This study was conceptually framed within the theory of instruction. Participants in the study were seven secondary administrators in a Texas urban school district. Data were collected through seven qualitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, and short narrative inquiry responses. Data were analyzed through a thematic analysis. The results of this study provide insights into the experiences secondary administrators face when hiring alternative certified teachers. This study contributes to the growing research in the area of alternative certified teachers, specifically by secondary administrators who hire them to be a high-quality teacher in the field of education.

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There are so many people I would like to thank who continuously supported me through this journey. I share this accomplishment with my family, who understood when I had to spend time away and miss family functions. I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, who taught me the value of hard work and Mr. John Harris, Jr., who was there for every professional accomplishment throughout my life. I know both of you are smiling down on me from Heaven. My entire family, who cheered me on the whole time, I am sincerely grateful for your love. I specifically share this accomplishment with my mother, grandmother, and Cameron, who make me a better man every day. I love you all dearly and hope I continue to make you proud.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of high-quality teachers has gained national attention for decades. Since 1983, teaching quality has had a longstanding history as one of the top concerns in education, and in the same year, concerns about teacher quality arose and were expressed when the U.S. government published a report regarding the state of America's schools. This report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), raised questions regarding teaching quality, teacher training, and content competence. The thrust to improve teacher quality and accountability measures continued with the establishment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). NCLB increased emphasis on teacher competence and quality and required teachers to be deemed competent by graduating with a major in the subject area taught, having credits equivalent to a major, or passing a content qualifying assessment (Goldhaber & Walch, 2013). In addition to these requirements, the governance of alternative certification became increasingly stringent. In December 2015, former President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which replaced the widely criticized NCLB (2002). This new legislation removed the highly qualified teacher requirements of the NCLB standard and left states responsible for certification requirements (Fennell, 2016).

Another important requirement to demonstrate teacher quality was certification. States provided several pathways to becoming a teacher, but research showed teachers with some pedagogical experience and college classroom instruction in the education department provided better performers (Hightower et al., 2011). Principals argued that success on a certification assessment, one of the major requirements for NCLB, did not equate to being an effective

teacher (Smith, 2008). The first, and arguably one of the most important, factor of a quality teacher was an academic degree. The belief that a teacher who taught in the area in which he or she intensely studied performed better and helped students achieve academic success. Some states attributed higher teacher quality to advanced degrees and increased exposure to specific coursework. However, there was no statistically significant research to prove the perspective (Hightower et al., 2011).

Some researchers attributed a teacher's content assessment scores as a factor contributing to quality teaching (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). These assessment scores included the TEXES (Texas Educator Certification Examination Program, 2020), Praxis (ETS, 2020), and other state certification tests. Research confirmed a correlation between success on certification tests and success in the classroom (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). This proved to be true in a study that took place in a small urban district with 40 teachers that completed their Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary and special education (Burke, 2005). The teachers that were observed in the study showed to be highly effective at the end of the year when it came to student assessments. Out of the 40 teachers that scored above the median range on the state certification tests, over 90% of their students passed the end-of-year state assessment (Burke, 2005).

Teacher quality extended beyond certification test scores and coursework. Grieve-MacDonald (2010) reported the ability to build relationships, positive classroom ethos, and communication skills were also essential to being a quality teacher. The author stated quality teachers must be able to develop their students' ability "to share ideas, think for themselves, express views effectively, plan, prioritize, and be involved in decision-making processes" (p. 275). Development of these skills allowed students to become equipped with skills necessary for success in the 21st century. Brooke (2020) stated that,

The power of collaboration is one of the best ways to empower teacher effectiveness. Frequent meetings to review, analyze and strategize based on various kinds of data available helps to ensure proper steps are taken to serve students in the classroom. (p. 4)

Statement of the Problem

The shortage of teachers in Texas validated the need for this study, especially those exiting traditional teacher programs, which has left many districts using a variety of recruitment strategies to fill the vacancies (García & Weiss, 2019). Some districts utilized virtual learning platforms such as Proximity Learning where a student was able to logon to a computer and receive their instruction from a certified teacher who usually resided in a different state and was retired from the teaching profession (Hobbs, 2018). According to Hobbs, “All 50 states and Washington, D.C., report teacher shortages, mainly in hard-to-fill areas like science, math and special education. School districts, citing tight budgets, aren’t boosting salaries in a profession with the average starting pay at \$39,000” (para. 7) as reported by the U.S. Department of Education.

The shortage was prevalent in urban school districts, especially in hard to fill secondary subject areas such as mathematics, science, technology, and special education (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). Moreover, the enrollment in traditional teacher education programs was decreasing, which led to the increase in enrollment of alternative routes to certification over the last 10 years (Lynch, 2018); however, there was a negative connotation by many in the teaching field about teacher candidates receiving an alternative route to certification (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). Alternative certified teachers were not looked at the same way as their traditional route to certification counterparts (Lynch, 2018). Some administrators questioned if alternative certified applicants were prepared for planning and instruction (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). In addition, alternative certified applicants were often deemed not being as ready to deal

with classroom management, to work with other teachers, and to build relationships with stakeholders when compared to traditional certified teachers that had student teaching experiences (Tournaki et al., 2009).

However, in a fast-growing society, enrollment in alternative programs continued to increase as the population of school-aged children expanded. There were many teachers on the cusp of retirement, and the teaching field was facing a situation where increased demand was faced with reduced supply (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). This research study examined secondary administrator's experiences hiring alternatively certified teachers.

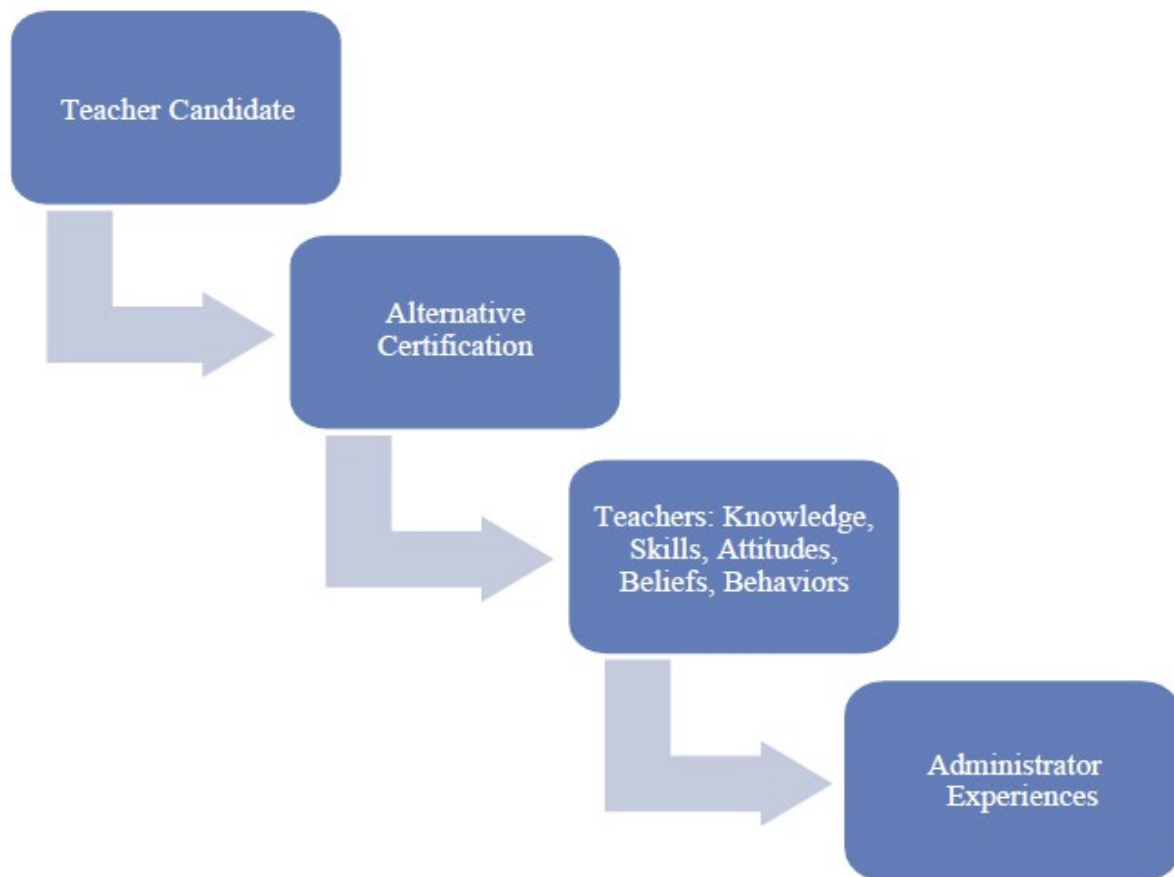
Conceptual Framework

The premise of this study was to explore secondary administrators' beliefs about the characteristics of alternatively certified candidates and their effectiveness while teaching. To guide the study, I developed a conceptual framework for studying alternative certification and the experiences of administrators hiring these teacher candidates. The conceptual framework was grounded in a theory of instruction that Bruner (1966) stated addressing four major aspects: (a) predisposition towards learning, (b) the ways in which a body of knowledge could be structured so that it could be most readily grasped by the learner, (c) the most effective sequences in which to present material, and (d) the nature and pacing of rewards and punishments (see Figure 1). A major theme in Bruner's (1966) theoretical framework demonstrated that learning became an active process in which learners constructed new ideas or concepts based on their current or past knowledge. Bruner's (1996) more recent work expanded his theory to encompass the social and cultural aspects of learning. The framework displayed teacher certification programs and other contextual factors played a role in the way administrators viewed alternatively certified candidates when hiring for high quality educational standards. The model addressed the

characteristics of the teacher candidates and alternative certification programs. In addition, the model addressed the beginning teacher's knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The conceptual framework emphasized the interactions of teachers, students, and administrators (Cohen et al., 2002).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Note. Framework used to describe administrators' experiences when hiring alternatively certified teachers. Adapted from Cohen et al., 2002, p. 85.

Cohen et al. (2002) found, "Scholars' interest has moved away from conventional conceptions. Research showed that practice-embedded knowledge and actions had significant effects on learning. Teachers' knowledge, skills, and strategic actions could be seen as resources to learning perspectives" (p. 85). As Figure 1 portrays, the model involved the teacher

candidate's educational background as the main factor for evaluating preparedness to become a teacher. Many alternative certification programs provided selection criteria for acceptance into their program (Unruh & Holt, 2010). Although there were as many as 52 alternative certification programs to choose from throughout Texas, there was not one that stood out in the local context (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Depending on the alternative program, the selection process varied in the level of intensity when applying to gain acceptance to begin the process of becoming certified as a teacher. Alternative certification program requirements differed in the amount and substance of coursework requisites, quantity of field experience obligations, and length of time spent student teaching (Townsend & Bates, 2007). The conceptual model that supported this study first focused on the teacher candidate's education and background.

The conceptual model then focused on the alternative certification program and the correlation to the state context for being hired and pursuing a standard teacher certificate. The Texas Education Agency (2020a) stated, "Alternative certification programs (ACP's) offer a nontraditional route to certification. These programs are located in universities, school districts, education service centers, community colleges, and private entities" (para. 1). The state encouraged routes to certification through alternative programs. The timeline for becoming an educator through an alternative certification program was very specific in nature, like any other route to teacher certification. In the conceptual model for this study, the alternative certification program goals, selection criteria, and intensity of training were vital components to the hiring administrators' perceptions.

The alternative certification program's goal, selection criteria, and intensity all had an impact on the teacher's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and behaviors (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007). This impact led to a variety of administrators' perceptions when it came time to

hire potential teacher candidates. Principal beliefs about effective teaching were key factors in the hiring process and shaped the teaching quality in their schools (Liu et al., 2015). Research identified characteristics associated with effective teaching (Loeb et al., 2011; Ziebarth-Bovill et al., 2012), and principals had the responsibility of recognizing those characteristics when hiring because “each position affects students and teachers as well as other stakeholders in the school” (Ingle et al., 2011, p. 580). The conceptual model established a theory for how alternative certification aligned with the many factors that influence the perceptions of administrators.

Purpose of the Study

Principals played an important role in hiring quality teachers for their schools, especially when evidence suggested that teachers had the most impact on student achievement and learning (Donaldson, 2011; Rivkin et al., 2005; Sanders & Horn, 1998). Principals’ beliefs about effective teaching were key factors in the hiring process and shaped the teaching quality in their schools, which affects student achievement (Liu et al., 2015). Research helped identify characteristics associated with effective teaching (Loeb et al., 2011; Ziebarth-Bovill et al., 2012), and principals had the responsibility of recognizing those characteristics when hiring because “each position affects students and teachers as well as other stakeholders in the school” (Ingle et al., 2011, p. 580). Darling-Hammond (2010) stated,

Parents, practitioners, and policymakers agree that the key to improving public education in America is placing highly skilled and effective teachers in all classrooms. Yet the nation still lacks a practical set of standards and assessments that can guarantee that teachers are well prepared and ready to teach. (p. 1)

The purpose of the current study was to gather secondary administrators’ perspectives when they had hired alternative certified teachers to determine strengths, weaknesses, and performance satisfaction.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were

1. What are alternative certified teachers' strengths?
2. What are alternative certified teachers' weaknesses?
3. Are administrators satisfied with the alternative certified teachers' performance?

The research questions were answered using three methods: administrative responses from surveys, interviews, and a short response question collected at the individual sites within one urban school district in Texas. Surveys were used to help answer the research questions regarding principals' beliefs when it came to hiring alternatively certified teachers in the state of Texas. This qualitative data collection approach was complemented with data gathered through one-on-one interviews and narrative inquiry. The qualitative data were coded to identify patterns and themes. Using these three data collection methods helped triangulate the data and increase validity of the study (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). These methods were used to answer the research questions as they pertain to principals' beliefs when it involved hiring alternatively certified teachers in the state of Texas.

Rationale for the Study

There was an ongoing shortage of teachers exiting traditional teacher programs. Heim (2016) stated, "Although nearly every state has reported shortages to the Department of Education, the problem is much more pronounced in some states than others. Across the country, they are disproportionately felt in special education, math, science, bilingual and English-language education" (para. 2). The rationale of this study was to gain an understanding of how administrators perceived alternatively certified teacher candidates when it involved to hiring them as a high-quality teacher. The goal of this study was to identify factors that influence

principals to hire alternatively certified candidates. Because the study focused on administrators' perspectives, it was important to remove all personal bias and collect the data in a professional manner. I took a comprehensive view of secondary administrators' experiences when hiring high quality candidates who chose an alternative route to certification in Texas.

Significance of the Study

Administrators played an important role in hiring quality teachers for their schools. Hiring, supporting, and sustaining effective teachers were the most important responsibilities of the administrator. Stronge and Hindman (2006) found, "Teacher selection is the process of choosing only high-quality employees from among the assembled applicants" (p. 18). The interview was an opportunity to integrate all the different sources of information about a candidate (Castetter, 1996). If interviewers were aware of teacher quality indicators, they would have a toolkit of items that were likely to be indicative of teacher effectiveness. A critical issue for school leaders charged with making hiring decisions was how best to capture the desired teacher effectiveness in the review of employment applications and, subsequently, in employment interviews. Identifying and selecting highly qualified individuals to facilitate learning in a productive and academically enriching classroom environment was integral to satisfying the need for capable teachers and fulfilling the requirements of ESSA (2015).

The findings of this study provided support for administrative personnel when it came to recruiting and hiring new teacher candidates. It was significant to understand all routes to certification when it came to creating an environment that supported student achievement. According to the National Center for Alternative Certification (2010), the number of teachers obtaining certification via an alternate route dramatically increased between 2000 and 2010, resulting in nearly one-third of all new teachers hired in the United States coming out of an

alternate program that led to certification. With the rapid growth in alternative routes to certification, this study could lead administrators to hire more high-quality teacher candidates.

Delimitations

The study focus was secondary school administrators in an urban school district located in Texas. The district served 41,000 students with 33 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, five comprehensive high schools, an alternative high school, and an advanced technology center. This district met the standards as measured by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness test (Texas Education Agency, 2020c). Texas Education Agency (2016) was responsible for 1,247 school districts in the state of Texas. The study represented only one school district out of 1,247.

Due to the specific nature of the sample, the generalizability of this study to other populations was limited. The data for this study were collected from secondary school administrators. This study provided a snapshot of the experiences of a limited number of administrators in an urban school district. The beliefs of the individuals involved in this study might not be the same as those in another district in the state.

Assumptions

In this study, there were three prominent assumptions. The major assumption was that administrators have a research-based view of what constitutes teacher quality. The second assumption was that there is a working definition and characteristics of teacher quality that were ingrained in administrators' minds. The last assumption was that the characteristics of a teacher were shared among administrators. These assumptions were not shared by all administrators but depended on the length of time an administrator had been in the educational field.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms were used throughout the study. For the purposes of consistency and clarity, they are defined for the reader.

- *Alternative route.* The requirements outlined by each state for a teacher to be qualified to teach at a grade level and in a content or subject area with reduced training for entry into teaching. Others used the term interchangeably with alternative certified teachers (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

- *Alternative certification program.* A program developed to provide potential teacher candidates an abbreviated teacher-training program. This was a pathway other than 4-year undergraduate or 1- or 2-year post baccalaureate programs that enabled candidates to meet the standards that were required of traditionally prepared candidates (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

- *Areas of refinement.* Area(s) in which the administrator and/or observer witnessed during an observation where the teacher needed help to improve their practice. (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

- *Areas of reinforcement.* Area(s) in which the administrator and/or observer observed the teacher's relative strength of the lesson. (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

- *Career technical education (CTE).* A program that offered a sequence of courses that provided students with coherent and rigorous content. CTE content was aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and careers in current or emerging professions (Texas Education Agency, 2019b).

- *Every Student Succeeds Act.* The nation's main education law for all public schools. The law held schools accountable for how students learn and achieve. ESSA (2015) aimed to

provide an equal opportunity for students who get services.

- *Highly qualified.* The term “highly qualified required the teacher has obtained full state certification as a teacher [including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification] or passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state” (National Association of Special Education Teachers, 2019, para. 1).

- *Teacher certification.* The requirements outlined by each state for a teacher to be qualified to teach at a grade level and in a content or subject area (Texas Education Agency, 2020b).

- *Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System.* A new teacher appraisal system for the state of Texas designed to support teachers in their professional development and helped them to grow and improve as educators. T-TESS became the state recommended system starting with the 2016-2017 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2020d).

- *Traditional certification program.* An approved education-training program offered by a post-secondary college or university that offered a degree in education. Each program of study aligns to state teacher certification guidelines and provided pre-service teaching and pedagogical coursework requirements. Others used the term interchangeably with traditional certified teachers (Texas Education Agency, 2020b).

- *Secondary school.* A school with corresponding grades of six through 12, which follows primary school and precedes post-secondary college or university setting (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

- *Texas Education Agency.* The administrative unit in Texas for primary and secondary education. The agency was comprised of the Commissioner of Education and agency staff, with duties that included guiding and monitoring activities and programs related to public education.

The stated mission of the agency included the goal of providing all students with a quality education (Texas Education Agency, 2019a).

- *Urban school district.*

A district is classified as urban is (a) located in a county with a population of at least 985,000, (b) its enrollment is the largest in the county or at least 70% of the largest district enrollment in the county, and (c) at least 35% of enrolled students are economically disadvantaged. A student is reported as economically disadvantaged if he or she is eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. (Texas Education Agency, 2017, para. 1)

Summary

The principal's job was to ensure the quality of education within the building. In the report, *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011*, Feistritzer (2011) stated, "new hires from alternative preparation programs really took off in the last five years, with 4 out of 10 new hires coming from these routes" and the "proportion of new hires between 2005 and 2010 coming from undergraduate teacher education programs dropped to 50 percent" (p. 21). In the state of Texas, educator preparation programs responsible for certifying teachers showed a similar trend (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Due to the high stakes task of securing the best teachers, Mason and Schroeder (2010) argued that "Without question, the single most important task of a principal is to hire highly qualified, exceptional staff. A poor hiring decision can result in declining school culture and problems for years to come" (p. 186). This study provided insight on the mindset of administrators in an urban Texas school district when hiring alternatively certified teachers

Organization of the Study

This dissertation was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the statement of the problem, conceptual framework, a brief overview of alternative routes to certification, purpose of the study, research questions, rationale for the study, significance of the study,

delimitations, assumptions of the study, and definition of key terms. Chapter 2 presents related components of the literature that included the background of alternative certification, hiring and selecting quality teachers, and quality teachers for student achievement and learning. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the research and procedures used for this study. A review of conceptual underpinning of the data analysis is included. Chapter 3 also addresses study limitations. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the findings of this research by exploring the results of the qualitative data collected. Chapter 5 includes a summary of this research study, discussion of the findings related to each of the research questions, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. In addition, the findings are discussed in relationship to previous research. The study concludes with references and appendices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student achievement was paramount at most campuses and studies showed that teachers had a direct impact on student achievement. With this thought in mind, principals aimed to recruit the best candidates. There was a paucity of literature about school administrators' experiences when hiring alternatively certified teachers. Therefore, a study of this nature added to the current literature. The research study examined principals' experiences with hiring alternatively certified teachers. The literature reviewed included principals' experiences of the impact of high-quality teaching and teacher effectiveness as a result of the selection and hiring process. In addition, the literature examined encompassed the teaching and effectiveness impact on student achievement and learning. Finally, the literature review covered the commonly held beliefs of traditional teacher preparation programs and alternative routes to certification.

Definition of a High-Quality Teacher

The definition of high-quality teachers has gained national attention starting with the introduction of NCLB. Throughout the years, the term has been used synonymously with teacher caliber, status, and value. However, the definition has been continuously changing as education has evolved. In the past, the definition that was identified as teacher quality was vastly different from what is currently present in the minds of educators (National Research Council, 2001). In fact, there did not seem to be a set definition on teacher quality. The definitions for teacher quality and teaching quality had been interchanged but were completely two different aspects when it came to identifying the proper meaning of the terms. There were many important factors when it came to recognizing a high-quality teacher (National Research Council, 2001).

One important factor in teacher quality was certification. There were several pathways to

becoming a teacher; however, research showed that teachers with some experience with pedagogy and classroom instruction tended to be better performers (Hightower et al., 2011). Smith (2008) argued that success on a certification test, one of the major requirements for NCLB (2002), did not necessarily equate to being an effective teacher. Another, factor of a quality teacher was an academic degree. The belief was that a teacher who taught in the area in which he or she intensely studied would perform better, and students would be more likely to achieve academic success. Some states attributed higher teacher quality to advance degrees and more exposure to specific coursework. However, there was no statistically significant research to demonstrate the perspective (Hightower et al., 2011).

Some researchers even attributed a teacher's content test scores as a factor contributing to quality teaching (Abell et al., 2006; Burke, 2005; Russell, 2006). These test scores included the ACT, SAT, Praxis, and other state certification tests. There was some research that confirmed a correlation between success on certification tests and success in the classroom (Abell et al., 2006; Russell, 2006). This proved to be true in a study that took place in a small urban district with 40 teachers that completed their Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary and special education (Burke, 2005). The teachers in the study graduated top of the class and obtained jobs teaching immediately after graduation. In their first year of teaching, every student in their classes was successful on end-of-the year assessments. The teachers who were observed in the study showed to be highly effective at the end of the year when it came to student assessments. Out of the 40 teachers that scored above the median range on the state certification tests, over 90% of their students passed the end-of-year state assessment (Burke, 2005).

Teacher quality extended beyond certification test scores and coursework. Grieve-MacDonald (2010) reported the ability to build relationships, positive classroom ethos, and

communication skills were also essential to being a quality teacher. Grieve-MacDonald stated quality teachers must be able to develop their students' ability "to share ideas, think for themselves, express views effectively, plan, prioritize and be involved in decision-making processes" (p. 275). Development of these skills allowed students to become equipped with skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

Selecting and Hiring Quality Teachers

Due to the high stakes task of securing the best teachers, Mason and Schroeder (2010) argued, "Without question, the single most important task of a principal is to select and hire highly qualified, exceptional staff. A poor hiring decision can result in declining school culture and problems for years to come" (p. 186). Organizational change could be one of the most common obstacles in hiring qualified teachers. The principal must establish a consistent process when looking to hire highly qualified teachers. Principals should continuously review instructional processes to create a framework for teacher effectiveness when selecting qualified teacher candidates to interview and hire to focus on the goal of student instruction. Thus, teachers' previous experiences, instructional processes, and ability to establish processes should be taken into consideration before deciding to hire a teacher (Brooke, 2020). As a result, utilizing this approach could derive the goal of instilling teacher effectiveness and benefit all school stakeholders.

Although many principals understood the importance of hiring a quality teacher, many agreed that the process could be grueling and overwhelming (Peterson, 2002). Peterson suggested that there are three steps to the hiring process: screening credentials, interaction with the candidate, and selection and hiring. Certification credentials and the teacher program route are considered first, with preference being given to traditional teaching candidates. However,

there was an increasing number of teachers entering the profession via the alternative certification route. Boyd et al. (2007) found,

Comparing the preparation of teachers entering the profession through these two routes is not easy. Little systematic information is available about either the structure or the content of their preparation or about how effective these teachers are in the classroom. (p. 45)

Boyd et al. cited pedagogy knowledge as the primary difference between candidates. Principals were taking a risk with both type of candidates, but the campus needs must be taken into account when vetting candidates.

Clement (2009) discovered that principals find the teacher selection process their most difficult and time-consuming responsibility. The literature showed that many principals waited until the last minute to anticipate openings at their campus. Instead, this should be an ongoing process throughout the year, accessing the needs of the campus. Clements stated,

Long before the interview begins, the individuals responsible for hiring need to determine the skills for the specific teaching position. The debate continues about the traits of effective teachers, and questions remain about content knowledge, lesson planning, teaching methods, and classroom management. (p. 22)

However, this was a lot to decipher from interaction in one interview with a teacher candidate (Peterson, 2002). Many times, principals had to base decisions on the candidate's experience. Moreover, a candidate's past behavior was the best predictor of future performance, so educators would be wise to craft interview questions that explored the experiences, skills, and behaviors of job candidates. Principals must examine prior research on the eligible candidate.

Finally, the third aspect of the process consisted of selection and hiring (Peterson, 2002). Principals suggested that coming prepared for the interview was helpful with decision making. Furthermore, being able to provide examples for the interview questions might put candidates at the top of the hiring list. Portfolios usually helped with this evidence-based approach to

answering interview questions. Using a prepared rubric to decide between the candidates assisted in creating nonbiased form of selection (Rochkind et al., 2007). Donaldson (2011) stated, “An evaluation instrument adds objectivity to the hiring process, as the candidate with the most targeted answers should get the job offer” (p. 29). Most principals were looking for academic language. These reoccurring words were documented on some form of a rubric, so that when the interviews were over, the principal could refer and score the candidates from highest to lowest. This part of the process was the most vital for choosing the most highly qualified candidate for the position (Donaldson, 2011).

There were many aspects to look at when selecting the most highly qualified candidate for a vacancy (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Although the process and selection were not easy, principals understood their role was vital to ensure the success of the students on their campus when it came to accountability.

There was no real indicator as to whether the candidate would be a true fit for the campus (Sass, 2011). However, starting the selection process early while there were still quality candidates to select for an interview was necessary. In addition, researching the candidates, using quality interview questions, and a rubric aided in choosing the best candidate for the position.

Quality Teachers for Student Achievement and Learning

Understanding the connection between student achievement and teacher quality was an important implication for the future of teaching and learning. Whether enrolled in K-12 or pursuing a college degree, the quality of the instructor was an essential component to student achievement and academic success. Research suggested high-quality teachers played a significant role in fostering student academic success (Duncan et al., 2011; Hattie, 2009; Kane et al., 2013); however, characteristics that administrators attributed to teacher quality were

important in aiding student achievement and learning.

Trammell and Aldrich (2016) discovered a link to personality characteristics of instructors that lead to student learning. Trammell and Aldrich identified desirable attributes of quality teachers, as measured by students. These traits included “caring, enthusiastic, approachable, inspiring, fair, well-prepared, and helpful” (p. 17). Students viewed the character of a teacher as a key factor to student achievement and learning; although positive personality traits were a valuable contributor to student achievement and learning, teacher knowledge and teaching skill were also important. Jimerson and Haddock’s (2015) research revealed the importance of understanding teacher cognitive operations and practices as being a valuable contributor to student achievement and learning. Brooke (2020) stated, teachers could achieve

... effectiveness through a shared and clear understanding of core instructional materials, leveraging several kinds of assessments to build profiles of student ability, informing instructional priorities through the use of data, leveraging research-based methodology for intervention, and embracing the process with consistency. (p. 7)

Effective professional development impacted teachers’ ability to build relationships, cognitive practices, and pedagogical knowledge. Blank (2013) found “content focus, longer duration, multiple activities, hands-on teacher learning, specific learning goals, and collective teacher participation” (p. 53) comprised the professional experiences that led to quality teaching and positively impacted student learning and achievement. Developing an instructor’s knowledge and teaching skill appeared to reinforce the importance of teacher quality on student achievement and learning; however, student learning and achievement were not the sole duty of educators. Students should also be responsible and accountable for their academic success.

Dandy and Bendersky (2014) conducted a study and found faculty and students shared a common definition of learning, as well as the process, class participation, and study habits involved in learning. These results implied students understood what might be required of them

to achieve academic success, including identifying deterrents to their success. Despite the researchers' hypothesis, most of the students and faculty identified students as the primary hindrance to learning (Dandy & Bendersky, 2014). With their study, Dandy and Bendersky offered a glance into the psychological sphere of administrators and their power to hire alternatively certified teachers. It might be of interest to the scholarship of teacher quality and student achievement to engage in research activities with other district administrators to further connect and evaluate the current teacher shortage (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Dandy and Bendersky's findings also indicated that hiring of alternative route to certification teachers motivated other administrators throughout the district and state to hire those candidates straight out of their certification program.

Teacher Mentoring on Teacher Effectiveness

Stakeholders in teacher education worldwide regarded school-based mentor-mentee as one of the important strategies to support teachers' learning to teach and, thus, to improve the quality of teaching (Wang & Odell, 2002). Gugu and Olaniran (2019) stated,

A mentor is a skilled individual who guides a less experienced person through a process or profession by building confidence and modelling positive behaviors in the person. An effective mentor must understand that his role is to be dependable, engaged, authentic, and tuned into the needs of the mentee. (p. 14181)

According to the Australian Department of Education and Training (2016), a pre-service teacher benefitted tremendously when attached with an experienced mentor for mentoring.

Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) conducted a study and found that 80% of the teachers mentored in their first year by a teacher tutor had proficient performance in their year of teaching. The study results indicated proven effectiveness in the classroom by documented exam results as the major important consideration. Student exam scores were the primary data tool principals used to assess teacher effectiveness during their year-end evaluations. The study

demonstrated that teachers who were mentored had students who performed higher on state assessments than those who were not mentored (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021).

Saunders et al. (1995) found there were four types of prospective school-based teacher trainers: Type 1: the hands-off facilitator, Type 2: the progressively collaborative mentor, Type 3: the professional friend, and Type 4: the classical mentor. The research showed progressively collaborative mentoring partnership to be the most successful. Saunders et al. (1995) mentioned,

Emphasizes the need to build up competence progressively, working alongside the teacher with pupils and supporting the student's weaknesses while actively suggesting things to do to as skills and confidence increase. It might be noted that they also refer to counselling and modelling as frequently as other clusters. (p. 213)

Traditional Certification Background

In the 1820s, programs to become a teacher started to appear in the United States (Ogden, 2006). These programs started out by being known as the Common School movement. In the article "Let's Bring Back the Teachers College," Ogden stated "Horace Mann and Henry Barnard were instrumental in the development of institutions that provided teachers for the growing Common School movement. Mann viewed schools as the great equalizer and promoted good teachers as the very foundation of the system" (p. 784). The Common School movement transitioned into being known as normal schools. According to Ogden, "The philosophy of this movement was teachers, teachers-in-training, and the students were all in the same building; teaching and learning was ongoing by all" (p. 784). Over time, these normal schools moved into the college or university setting of education.

At the start of teacher preparation programs, there was only one way to be identified as certified to teach (Boser et al., 1986). Teachers originally had to go through a traditional program to teach. In Texas, the traditional route to certification generally came in two ways at the university level. The first type required that the student complete an undergraduate degree in

education. This route took at least four years of study. The second type was a post-baccalaureate program, which could have included a graduate degree. This route required the student to complete all coursework and a student teaching internship (Boser et al., 1986). Traditionally certified teachers were the first to be given the opportunity to teach with an educational licensure.

As time went on, the prediction of teacher shortage presented fear in the minds of those in the profession (Stoddart & Floden, 1995). The length of time it took to achieve certification started to come into play for people in the field. Ultimately, in the 1980s, this culminated in the invention of alternative routes to certification. Alternative routes to certification supplemented the traditional route. Stoddart and Floden (1995) stated, “The choice between a traditional program and an alternate route is not a choice between some professional preparation and no preparation” (pp. 7-8). In California and school districts like those in Texas, Gardner (2016) found, “The Learning Policy Institute found that 75 percent of 211 districts, which reflects the demographics of the state’s 1,025 districts, reported difficulty filling positions. Low-income and rural areas were hit the hardest” (para. 1). Teacher shortages remained a high concern throughout time, when candidates were trying to fill teacher positions using the traditional route of certification.

Perceived Strengths of Traditional Certification

There were strengths surrounding traditional certification. Those who supported traditional certification routes believed these teachers had a better background in educational theory, which made candidates more marketable when it came to getting their first teaching job (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1995). In addition, traditional certification programs usually required an internship. This allowed for the teacher to get better acclimated with the profession,

so that teachers were not seeing the classroom for the first time before they were hired to teach. Although the length of internship differed from university to university, it was approximately a year in length before the student graduated with a degree in education. Ultimately, the internship was seen as a critical piece when enhancing a student's pedagogical skill set (Jelmberg, 1996; Melser, 2004; Spooner et al., 2008).

Perceived Weaknesses of Traditional Certification

There was some criticism supporting traditional certification. The first involved a lack of consistency between traditional certification programs. Although many required a student to complete an internship, the amount of time ranged anywhere from a couple of hours to a year in length. Many programs shortened the length of internship time to compete with other universities and alternative routes to certification (Jelmberg, 1996; Melser, 2004; Spooner et al., 2008).

According to Levine (2006), "The nation's teacher education programs were inadequately preparing graduates to meet the realities of today's standards-based, accountability-driven classrooms, in which the primary measure of success is student achievement" (p. 1). There was not agreement on what should be taught at the university level when it came to preparing students for the classroom. Many administrators believed preparation should be focused on academics rather than teacher practice. Others believed certain skills could be learned with on-the-job training in the classroom (Levine, 2006).

Pros and cons could be found for any type of traditional certification program. Because not all traditional teacher certification programs had the same requirements for entrance into the teaching field (Levine, 2006). To identify an in-depth view of the strengths and weaknesses, there was a continued great need for more substantial research. Currently, the literature presented a paucity when addressing weaknesses of traditional certification. In order to review the

weaknesses of a program, universities should continuously review research focused on areas where the university was insufficient when it came to the implementation of end of course surveys and continuous academic coaching provided to students in their program of study. Constant communication by department faculty and students was imperative when addressing the weaknesses of a program. Communication should be scheduled to happen between both parties to ensure success (Kane & Staiger, 2012).

To garner needed feedback, many university programs have addressed weaknesses by implementing end-of-course surveys (Kane & Staiger, 2012). The surveys provided sufficient information when evaluating the quality of the professor and courses offered to students in a program. According to Kane and Staiger, there was a notion that teacher evaluation systems in America were noneffective. Some states and school districts were looking to reinvent the way they gained feedback when it came to teacher evaluations. Policymakers were often getting feedback from stakeholders to review tools to address program achievement levels. A study conducted at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden showed that student feedback plays a large impact on university teachers' teaching practices and helped them improve their courses and their practices (Flodén, 2017). Flodén stated, "Teachers receiving negative student feedback experience more negative feelings related to the feedback, are also more likely to introduce unjustified changes to their teaching in order to please students" (Abstract) and reflected on their practices to maintain student interest to negate dropout rates.

To focus on coaching, academic advisors were utilized at universities to provide support for students. Students emphasized having an assigned advisor was necessary to maintain retention within a college program. One identified barrier to postsecondary success was lack of access to appropriate information. The need for student guidance in college had been well

documented. Scott-Clayton (2011) found that such students often did not know they need help, did not take the initiative to seek it out, or did not know what questions to ask. Coaching also proved a more cost-effective method of achieving retention and completion gains when compared with previously studied interventions such as increased financial aid. Bettinger and Baker (2014) stated “College graduation rates often lag behind college attendance rates. One theory as to why students do not complete college is that they lack key information about how to be successful or fail to act on the information” (Abstract). Inside Track research showed that 17 cohorts of students were examined over the course of an entire year. The cohorts were divided into groups of coached and noncoached students. The results showed the students that were coached were 5.2% more likely to stay in a college program and likely to finish (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

Alternative Certification Background

Some differentiate between the terms *alternative certification* defined as reduced training for entry into teaching, and *alternative route* defined as pathways other than four-year undergraduate or 1- or 2-year post baccalaureate programs that enabled candidates to meet similar standards. Others used the terms interchangeably (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007). The ongoing word choice changed over time and continued to evolve, depending on the location. Although the time spent to achieve standard certification through alternate routes to certification in Texas had stayed consistent.

For many decades, a degree in teacher education was 4 years of undergraduate study. In some cases, education students completed core education courses then completed the major in teacher education, culminating in student teaching at a university. During the current severe teacher shortages in Texas; however, requiring completion of a 4-year program did not

adequately meet the hiring needs of all public schools (May et al., 2003). Nontraditional teacher candidates and midcareer professionals often balked at the notion of starting over in full-time university courses with students half their ages. An alternative approach to certification became a necessity for providing qualified teachers for the nation's schools (Rochkind et al., 2007).

The Texas Education Agency (2020a) stated, "Alternative certification programs (ACP's) offer a nontraditional route to certification. These programs are located in universities, school districts, education service centers, community colleges, and private entities" (para. 1). Since their arrival in the early 1980s, the number of alternative certification programs steadily increased in Texas (Honawar, 2007). Changes in certification policy allowing alternative certification teacher access to the profession resulted in increased numbers of alternative certification programs and an increase in the number of teachers who entered the profession through an alternative certification program (Heinen & Scribner, 2007).

Certification requirements differed in the amount and substance of coursework requisites, quantity of field experience obligations, and length of time spent student teaching (Townsend & Bates, 2007). Just as each state had its own requirements for certification, so also were the processes for approving colleges and universities to offer teacher certification programs and to award institutional recommendations (Brown, 2006). Texas Education Agency (2020a) stated the following timeline for becoming an educator through an alternative certification program:

1. Decide what you would like to teach
2. Select an approved texas ACP
3. Meet the screening criteria of the program
4. Develop a certification plan with your program
5. Obtain a teaching position
6. Apply for a probationary certificate

7. Complete all requirements for a standard certificate
8. Apply for the standard certificate (p. 1)

The process listed became standard for all teacher candidates wishing to become certified in the state of Texas. The standard certification process could be achieved in a year if a candidate secured employment. Once the school year was completed, the principal initiated the process by verifying all the proper qualification were reached for the candidate's approved alternative route to certification.

Perceived Strengths of Alternative Routes to Certification

There were strengths surrounding alternative routes to certification. Those who praised this route to certification often had some type of affiliation with an alternatively certified program. In addition, many had either hired, taught with, or mentored an alternatively certified candidate to gain these perceptions (Berry et al., 2004).

Boyd et al. (2007) reviewed the research and found that highly selective alternative certification programs produced effective teachers. "The National Center for Education Statistics reported in May 2018, 'Of the 3.8 million public school teachers working in school year 2015–16, approximately 676,000 (18 percent) had entered teaching through an alternative route to certification program'" (Mulvihill & Martin, 2019, p. 1). Humphrey et al. (2008) stated,

Effective programs select well-educated individuals or work to strengthen subject knowledge and recognized that classroom experience. Effective programs provide carefully constructed and timely coursework tailored to candidates' backgrounds and school contexts. And, effective programs provide trained mentors who have the time and resources to plan lessons with candidates, share curricula, demonstrate lessons, and provide feedback after frequent classroom observations. (p. 2)

Overall, effective alternative certification program placed candidates with strong campus administration and teacher leaders with supplies they needed to be successful.

Originally, alternative certification programs were created to help with teacher shortage

by attracting knowledgeable career-changers and retirees into the profession and as a means of eliminating the need for emergency certification (Corbin, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1998). Alternative certification increased the supply of highly qualified teachers (Berry et al., 2004). Alternative certification offered flexibility when it came to filling vacancies in urban and rural locations, and it fostered greater diversity in the teaching workforce. The certification expansion allowed the field of education to incorporate more minority candidates other than Caucasian descendent. In addition, alternative routes to certification saw an increase in male teachers entering the teaching field (Chin & Young, 2007; Corcoran, 2007; Sullivan, 2001).

Perceived Weaknesses of Alternative Routes to Certification

There was considerable criticism surrounding alternative routes to certification. Those who criticized this route to certification felt that these teacher candidates had not paid their dues. This route was a shortcut to certification. In addition, many believed that passing a content test did not justify that one was ready for the teaching field (Berry et al., 2004). Some believed certification tests were not an accurate measure of whether a teacher would be effective because the tests were designed to measure content and pedagogical knowledge rather than pedagogical skills. They were also concerned because the tests were a measure of minimum competency (Boyd et al., 2007; Walsh, 2004). Many people believed that candidates could study for the test. In addition, these alternative route to certification of teachers could rely on study groups or buying software to aid in passing the content tests. If one had access to the Internet or an electronic device, alternative route candidates were going to be privy to information without having to sit in a classroom. In fact, several certification test administrators prepared practice preparation manuals readily available on their websites to aid anyone interested in passing a certification test (Berry et al., 2004).

Summary

The assumption was that the referenced literature supported the significant role administrators' experiences played in hiring alternative route teachers, and how teacher personality traits and professional development, ideas about learning, and collaboration could affect the hiring process. For the purposes of this research, I examined principals' perspectives on hiring alternative certified teachers in Texas. This chapter was a brief review of literature related to alternative certification programs. There was a paucity of literature regarding school administrators' experiences hiring alternative certified teachers. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology for this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviews the research design: the qualitative research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations. The process of instrument validation, including instrument creation, expert panel, and pilot testing are incorporated as well. A visual representation of the methodology reflects the key constructs of the research design. A description of key components of the design follows.

Research Design

A phenomenological qualitative study was implemented to describe how administrators assigned to secondary schools perceived alternatively certified teachers when hiring high quality teachers derived by their prior experiences. The qualitative analysis involved research conducted through surveys, semi-structured interviews, which involved interviewing principals to assess their experiences with hiring alternatively certified teachers, and a short narrative inquiry response. A qualitative analysis allowed for a comprehensive representation of the study.

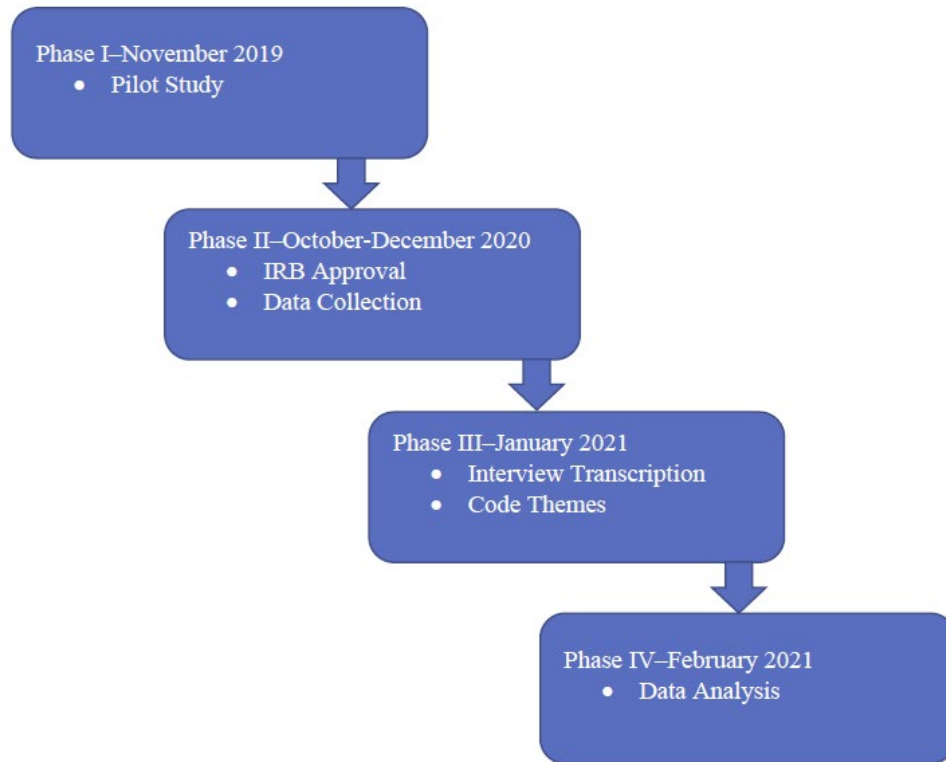
This study answered the following research questions as they pertained to administrators' experiences when it came to hiring alternatively certified teachers in the state of Texas.

1. What are alternative certified teachers' strengths?
2. What are alternative certified teachers' weaknesses?
3. Are administrators satisfied with the alternative certified teachers' performance?

Administrators could utilize this study to guide hiring decisions and to understand key characteristics associated with a quality teacher. Ultimately, students should benefit from having a high-quality teacher, as the data illustrated. Figure 2 presents the research design model.

Figure 2

Phenomenological Research Timeline



Note. This timeline illustrates when data were collected and analyzed.

A phenomenological qualitative study was implemented to describe how secondary school administrators’ experienced hiring alternatively certified teachers. An alternatively certified teacher was a teacher qualified to teach at a grade level and in a content or subject area with reduced training required for entry into teaching. A phenomenological qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because all the members of the study have shared the same experiences. Per Creswell (2012), phenomenology “describes the meaning for several individuals of the *lived experiences* of a concept” (p. 57).

Population and Sample

The focus of inquiry for this study was secondary school administrators in an urban

school district located in Texas. The district served 41,000 students with 33 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, five comprehensive high schools, an alternative high school, and an advanced technology center. This district met the standards as measured by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness test. Texas Education Agency (2019a) regulates 1,247 school districts in the state of Texas. The study was one school district out of 1,247.

Due to the nature of the study, only a few administrators were selected to participate in the study. The number of secondary campuses located within the district was the leading cause for the small sample size. I utilized purposeful sampling for secondary administrators located at middle and high school campuses in an urban Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex district. The pseudonym, Project ISD, was used to maintain confidentiality of the district. Pseudonyms also were used for all campuses and participants. The sampling method involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that were especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2012). The seven administrators, two of them alternative certified, were selected from different middle schools within the district, along with different high school campuses.

Participants were interviewed, but their anonymity was protected. Their names and assigned campuses were not shared in the research; only their experiences were shared throughout the study. Any identifiable characteristics of the campuses or names of administrators and staff were removed. The administrators were referred to by a number in the research: Administrator 1 (A1), Administrator 2 (A2), Administrator 3 (A3), and so forth.

Instrumentation

This study involved three measures: a) A researcher-created survey Appendix A was distributed by email and composed of open-ended questions (see Appendix A); b) a one-hour-

long semi-structured, in-depth, interview was conducted with seven secondary school administrators (see Appendix B), and c) a narrative writing session (see Appendix C). The research instruments allowed administrators to share their perspectives regarding the composition of alternatively certified teachers.

The research survey was developed and then sent to an expert panel for review and feedback. A copy of the email that requested feedback for content validity was provided in Appendix D. The expert panel included: (a) a professor of educational leadership at Texas A&M University Commerce, (b) an assistant director of the Middle School Matters Institute at the University of Texas, (c) a professor of the school psychology program at Texas A&M University, and (d) a Career and Technology Education director.

All experts hold doctorates, had worked in the realm of education, and had published articles recently. In addition, all experts had previously served in the capacity of a public-school administrator. Correspondence with individual panel members was conducted via email. The initial contact requesting panel participation was completed via email in the months of September, October, and November 2019. After emailed acceptance, I submitted the survey instrument to each panel member along with instructions that the instrument was to be considered and analyzed for probable content validity of the questions/statements for measuring the variables that might relate to the beliefs of secondary school administrators.

Panel Expert A was expeditious in her responses and feedback. All correspondence was within two days of the initial email. Panel Expert B responded to the initial request to participate within two days, and the expert wrote asking a few questions before rendering an opinion on the instrument's validity. Questions included: (a) Did the survey's creator conduct any validity tests? and (b) Has anyone else used this survey in their research? I responded by stating the survey had

not been used in another dissertation, and that I would be validating the survey by pilot testing the survey with a district outside of the participating district, with administrators like the ones involved in the study.

According to Creswell and Miller (2010), there were eight validation strategies frequently used by qualitative researchers. Creswell (2014) recommended examining all eight of the procedures and utilizing at least two of the following strategies in a study: a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, b) triangulation, c) peer review or debriefing, d) negative case analysis, e) clarifying, f) member checking, g) rich thick description, and h) external audits. I used more than the recommended two strategies for validation by utilizing the methods of triangulation, peer review and debriefing, clarifying, and rich thick description. I employed a vast number of strategies, so that the information could be transferred to other settings because of the shared characteristics.

After securing Panel Expert C, I sent a follow-up email after the panel expert had time to review the survey for both 7 days and 14 days to ensure there were no lingering questions and/or concerns. The expert responded that there were no concerns, and the survey exhibited content validity—one of the traditional forms of validity (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2012), content validity was evident when the items assess the content they were envisioned to assess. Seven days after submitting the survey instrument to Panel Expert D, I sent a follow-up email asking if there were any questions or concerns. The expert responded that they were finishing their review and had only a few recommendations that I should share with the panel.

After an analysis of the expert contributors' responses, items were adapted accordingly to integrate contributors' feedback. Suggestions from feedback included: (a) removing the statement "I believe that" since it was implied in the statements; (b) clarifying/changing reading

recovery as all may not know what it was; (c) clarifying/changing Jr. because everyone might not understand the term, which would cause them to rank their thoughts differently; and (d) adding an additional comments box after the research questions/statement to gain understanding as to why participants answered the way they did. I revised the survey with the suggested changes and resubmitted to the panel for final review. All panel members agreed the additions would add to the study. The noted changes were made for final revision before the survey was sent to the pilot survey participants. The feedback/recommendations from the panel of experts assisted me in refining the survey items for the purpose of using them in the study.

Pilot Testing

The pilot study provided an opportunity to further cultivate and refine the survey instrument. Creswell (2012) ascertained a pilot study aided in establishing content validity and improving instrumentation format as well as determined that the study participants were capable of comprehending and completing the survey. Baker (1994) discovered pilot studies with sample sizes of 10% to 20% of the actual study sample size were an appropriate number of participants to conduct the study. Random sampling was the preferred sampling approach (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, I randomly selected participants for the pilot study. I sent correspondence via email to all secondary principals in the district requesting participation in the pilot study. Three principals responded positively to the request. A pilot test involving three secondary principals (roughly 10% of the targeted participating study sample size) was performed prior to the start of the study. Table 1 represented key characteristics and specific survey demographics for the pilot participants. A neighboring school district of the participating district was used for the pilot test. The pilot tested principals were employed in a large, urban district (like the participating district) with over 57,000 students. There were 22 secondary schools with an estimated student

population of just over 31,000 including middle, high, and alternative schools. Table 1 is an overview of secondary administrators in the pilot tests, regarding their beliefs on hiring alternatively certified teachers.

Table 1

A Summary of Key Characteristics and Specific Survey Demographics for the Pilot Participants

Pilot Participant	Gender	Race	Years as a Secondary Administrator
1	Female	White	5
2	Female	African American	13
3	Female	Hispanic	9

The initial contact requesting pilot test participation was done via email in the month of November 2019. After emailed acceptance, I submitted the survey instrument to each of the three secondary administrators (pilot participants) with instructions to complete the survey, and the instrument was to be considered and analyzed for probable content validity of the questions/statements for measuring the variables that may relate to the perceptions of secondary school principals on hiring alternatively certified teachers. Pilot participants were asked to give feedback to improve the survey instrument. As pilot participants completed the survey, I received alerts from Survey Monkey new surveys had been submitted. Within four days of submitting the survey link to the pilot participants, the pilot test surveys were complete. I emailed the pilot test participants individually, thanking them for their participation, and once again asked if there was any additional feedback, they would like to offer concerning the instrument.

According to Creswell (2012), the purpose of the pilot test of a survey was so that a researcher could revise the survey instrument based on the feedback provided by the pilot test

participants. Pilot test feedback included (a) allowing explanations to be optional was a positive (even though it lengthened an otherwise short survey) and (b) an additional optional comment box could be added after the last question to allow respondents the opportunity to comment as to why they ranked items the way they did. I submitted the pilot participants' suggestions to the panel for final review via email. All panel experts agreed with the additions. The optional comment box item was integrated according to the pilot contributors' feedback and panel experts' recommendations. I downloaded the pilot test results from Survey Monkey into an Excel spreadsheet.

Data Collection Procedures

Data in this study were approved by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtained from individuals who were employed as administrators on secondary campuses in Project ISD. Each administrator was given a survey and interviewed for one hour each in which successive questions were asked about his or her experiences concerning hiring high-quality and alternatively certified teachers. The administrators had been in their job positions five or more years. All the administrators hold at least a master's degree with some holding doctorate degrees in the field of education.

As a former educator in the district of Project ISD, I had access to each individual since he knew every administrator on a professional basis. I contacted each administrator by email and set up a time and date for each interview. Interviews were held via the Zoom platform in the privacy of the interviewee's home. The Zoom platform was utilized to ensure the maximum amount of safety due to the COVID-19 outbreak and protocols. The data were analyzed so that the beliefs of administrators when hiring alternatively certified teachers as high-quality teachers would be understood. The timeline established approximate dates:

- Month 1: I notified the school district about the potential study and presented the research proposal. Once the school district agreed to participate in the study, I presented a proposal to the IRB for review and approval. The IRB approved the research proposal.
- Principals were purposefully selected, interviews were conducted, and survey questions [Appendix A] were distributed by email. Interviews were conducted at the district's professional development center.
- Month 2: Data collection process began with sorting, compiling, and categorizing interview and survey results. Dedoose software was used to analyze survey answers and identify themes (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2016).
- Months 2-3: The results were reviewed a second time for validation by another researcher and transcribed by TranscribeMe.
- Month 4: After the study was completed, the findings were presented to the school district and other stakeholders, as well as my respective departments.

My prior campus provided the recording device at no cost, and the computer on which the data were stored was my own personal property. No travel expenses were required to complete any part of the study. I will keep all research data and records for a minimum of five years.

Data Analysis

I conducted hour-long interviews in which the participants described their experiences on hiring high-quality and alternatively certified teachers. The interviews were recorded with a hand-held recording device and uploaded to my personal computer. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and read repeatedly to look for recurring themes; thematic coding methods were used to analyze data and look for patterns. Dedoose was utilized to conduct the data analysis of the qualitative survey questions to amplify secondary administrators voice in the research process (Saldaña, 2016).

Each question was generated with a node and the highest keyword percentage was derived to create themes of the findings. Validation of the study was determined by asking

Creswell's (2012) suggested questions about the "quality of a phenomenology" (p. 215).

Administrators could utilize this study to guide hiring decisions and understand key characteristics associated with a quality teacher when interviewing alternatively certified teacher candidates.

The individual interview research component of this phenomenological qualitative study provided qualitative data regarding administrator's judgments and beliefs about teacher quality. Principals' judgment, beliefs, and research likely shaped their efforts to recruit and hire teachers, which had the potential to enhance student academic success. Dedoose was utilized to conduct the data analysis of individual qualitative questions (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2016). Each question was generated with a node and the highest keyword percentage would be derived to create themes of the findings.

Although each administrator was assigned to a secondary school campus and shared a similar job description, their actual experiences varied widely. However, each of them had experienced the phenomenon that was being studied (Creswell, 2012). Each administrator was interviewed for an hour and asked questions about his or her experiences in hiring quality teacher candidates. The interviews were recorded on an audio-recording device and the recordings were transcribed both by myself and a professional transcription service. Although there were programs available to aid in the dictation and transcription of audio files, these were not used due to budgetary considerations. I transcribed individual interviews manually. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) pointed out that it was acceptable to transcribe by hand "but leave out a lot of the material that does not address your concerns" (p. 132). In this case, parts of the recording that addressed personal concerns or side conversations that were not part of the study were removed from the transcription to focus on the main essence of the experience. Identifying characteristics of

teachers and campuses was removed to protect anonymity.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study included the number of administrators interviewed. In the study, utilizing one school district provided a lack of resources, which created an obstacle that limited the scope of the analysis of themes from the limited number of perspectives. Research in the analysis of secondary administrators' perception on hiring alternatively certified teachers was limited. Since the study contained perceptions, biases could influence responses and had to be considered. In addition, it was impossible to know whether the interviewee was communicating truthful statements (Walford, 2011). Additionally, administrators' memories were malleable and subject to change over time due to different experiences during their careers.

A major limitation included the possibility that some administrators being interviewed were once alternatively certified teachers. Considering the possibility that the administrators came into the educational field as an alternatively certified teacher, they might express some type of bias. In addition, their personal experiences as a teacher could be inputted into the study, which might shape the outcome of the study when obtaining favorable characteristics of high quality and alternatively certified candidates. For these reasons, administrators were asked to consider their experiences.

An additional limitation might be my ability to bracket personal experiences with the administrators' perception on hiring alternatively certified teachers successfully. Fischer (2009) defined bracketing as:

an investigator's identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study's data. For the sake of viewing data freshly, these involvements are placed in "brackets" and "shelved" for the time being as much as possible. (p. 583)

Tufford and Newman (2010) stated, “Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process” (Abstract). Although I achieved teacher certification through the alternative route to certification, it was undesirable to introduce personal bias into the study, so I had to bracket as much as possible in order to focus on the experiences of the administrator participants. The interview protocol was scripted with interview questions, so as not to introduce undue influence in the form of a leading question. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained how a researcher replaced a valid and reliable instrument in qualitative inquiry, so it was necessary to have personal credibility and trustworthiness when interpreting the data. This was accomplished through using strategies such as debriefing with peers to ensure the soundness of the data analysis.

Due to the specific nature of the sample, the generalizability of this study to other populations was limited. The data for this study were collected from a few secondary school administrators. This study provided a snapshot of the perspectives of a limited number of administrators in an urban school district. The beliefs of the individuals involved in this study might not be the same as those in another district in the state.

Summary

The rationale of this study was to gain an understanding of how administrators perceive alternatively certified teacher candidates when it came to hiring them as a high-quality teacher. The goal of this study was to identify factors that influence principals to hire alternatively certified candidates. Because the study focused on administrators’ perspectives, it was important to remove all personal bias and collect the data in a professional manner. The study provided a view of secondary administrators’ experiences when hiring high-quality candidates who chose an alternative route to certification in Texas.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the current study was to gather secondary administrators' experiences when they have hired alternative certified teachers in order to determine strengths, weaknesses, and performance satisfaction. Seven secondary administrators were surveyed and interviewed in the spring of 2021 across several secondary campuses, providing qualitative data sets for analysis. Secondary administrators were randomly selected from Project ISD. The secondary administration selection process was entirely confidential. For this reason, the number of secondary administrators was determined based on their completed survey responses. Table 2 provides further details on the composition of the administrators surveyed and interviewed. In total seven secondary administrators participated in the surveys, one-on-one interviews, and a narrative response inquiry.

Table 2

Secondary Administrators Composition

Grade Level	Gender	
	Male	Females
Middle School	1	2
High School	2	2
Totals	3	4

This chapter begins with my bracketing prior to the data analysis, which was organized around survey and one-to-one interview questions, and then a short response inquiry. The study instruments were first analyzed and then aligned to research questions to draw keyword analysis and thematic conclusions. The research questions for the study were:

1. What are alternative certified teachers' strengths?

2. What are alternative certified teachers' weaknesses?
3. Are administrators satisfied with the alternative certified teachers' performance?

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of research bracketing, data analysis protocols, and procedures for each research instrument followed by survey, interview, short response inquiry results with key word analysis, and theme identification. The data analysis is organized throughout the chapter by survey and interview questions followed by the short response inquiry.

Researcher's Bracketing

For this phenomenological study, I used the process of bracketing to reflect on my previous experiences with the influence of administrator bias on alternative teacher certification when hiring for high quality teachers. Tufford and Newman (2010) stated, "Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process" (Abstract). Although I achieved teacher certification through the alternative route to certification, it was undesirable to introduce personal bias into the study, so I bracketed as much as possible in order to focus on the experiences of the administrator participants. The instrument protocols were scripted with questions, so I did not introduce undue influence in the form of leading questions.

Data Analysis

Dedoose provided a qualitative research analysis tool that allowed me to sort data based on phrases or words to generate themes and references across the framework of this study (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2016). The data collected from participant surveys remained confidential while a full analysis of statements was conducted. Surveys from secondary administrators were uploaded into the program. As participants returned responses to the surveys, they were coded in numerical order with the prefix of letter A to ensure anonymity.

Data were then uploaded to the appropriate node I developed for each of the 13 survey questions, 20 interview questions, and narrative response inquiry. A node was a digital locker within the Dedoose program where common data, research, references, videos, and transcripts were stored.

Survey Keyword(s) and Theme

Participant responses were entered into the Dedoose software, which provided the information about themes and keywords (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2016). Each word was given a weighted percentage based on frequency. All responses were entered into the appropriate node that represented the corresponding survey questions. Theoretical data saturation was determined based on word frequency.

Nodes helped me organize the data and assisted in the identification of themes and common words from each respondent. In identifying themes and common word frequency, I was able to highlight a given section within a node and run a word frequency query. The query produced a detailed analysis of each word selected and assigned it a weighted percentage. Respondents' detailed responses were entered into each node that allowed for a direct quote analysis and further exploration of participants' experiences on alternative certified teachers when hired at the secondary level. Each question yielded a different frequency (see Table 3).

Table 3

Frequency of Keyword(s) Per Survey Question

Question	Keyword(s)	Frequency
1	None	None
2	None	None
3	None	None
4	None	None
5	Instructional Leader	11
6	Educate	5

(table continues)

Question	Keyword(s)	Frequency
7	Creative	4
8	Hard-working	7
9	CTE	5
10	Collaborative	4
11	Experience	7
12	Moderate	7

Qualitative Analysis Results by Survey Question

Survey Question 1

What is your current school setting?

Question 1 allowed participants to provide data about their current school setting. All participants were secondary school administrators. Table 4 provides a further breakdown of the percentage of middle and high school participants.

Table 4

Question 1: Survey Data

Grade Level	%
Middle School	43
High School	57

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Survey Question 2

How many years have you been a certified teacher?

Table 5

Question 2: Survey Data

Years Certified as Teacher	%
0-5 Years	0
5-10 Years	0
10-15 Years	28.6
15+ Years	71.4

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Survey Question 3

How many years have you been a secondary administrator?

Question 3 allowed participants to provide data about their years of experience as a secondary school administrator. Table 6 provides a range for the number of years the participants have served as an administrator at the secondary school level.

Table 6

Question 3: Survey Data

Years as Secondary Administrator	%
0-5 Years	14.3
5-10 Years	14.3
10-15 Years	14.3
15+ Years	57.1

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Survey Question 4

Have you ever hired an alternatively certified candidate?

Question 4 allowed participants to provide data about hiring experiences. All participants have hired an alternative certified teacher candidate during their time as an administrator. The question did not yield any keywords.

Survey Question 5

How would you describe the role of and/or responsibilities of the campus administrator?

Question 5 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their perspective of their role, to see whether there was a relationship between leadership and teacher quality. Table 7 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were instructional leader, advocate, coach, and developer.

Table 7

Question 5: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Instructional Leader	5.33
Advocate	4.73
Coach	3.55
Developer	2.96

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *exhibit instructional leadership qualities*. Participants shared that they had many roles as a secondary administrator, but instructional leader was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A2 stated, "My role is to be an instructional leader and student advocate." Participant A3 added,

The first role of the principal is hiring the right personnel for the job. The principal is responsible for being an instructional leader and leading a campus to excellence by using distributive leadership to grow the capacity of the staff.

Participant A7 stated, "My role is to facilitate student growth by being an instructional leader, supporting staff, and creating a positive campus culture to allow stakeholders to thrive."

Additionally, Participant A6 shared,

I must be a strong instructional leader with the knowledge to analyze test data. Then create a plan to move the campus in a positive direction towards improvement and student success. The campus principal must also be an instructional coach.

Survey Question 6

What is the purpose of alternative certification programs?

Question 6 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their perspective of alternative certified programs, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative and traditional certified programs in regard to teacher quality. Table 8 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on

weighted percentage were educate, train, recruit, and opportunity.

Table 8

Question 6: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Educate	5.05
Train	4.04
Recruit	3.03
Opportunity	2.02

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified programs purpose was to educate teachers without teacher certification*. Participants shared many purposes of the alternative certification program but educate was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A4 stated, "The purpose of an alternative certification program is to educate, recruit, and train high quality individuals for the modern-day classroom." Participant A1 added, "The purpose of alternative certification programs is to certify primarily non-education majors for the field of education opportunity."

Participant A5 stated, "The purpose of ACPs is to educate, those seeking teaching as a profession, the pedagogy and content necessary to design and deliver instruction to students." Additionally, Participant A6 shared, "The purpose of the program is to educate and prepare teachers to be successful in the classroom who did not go through a traditional route. Provide them with a variety of professional learning opportunities on best research instructional practices."

Survey Question 7

What positive traits do you see in alternative certified teachers?

Question 7 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of

alternative certified teacher traits, to see whether there was a relationship between positive traits and alternative certified teachers' strengths. Table 9 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were creative, eager, optimistic, willingness, ambitious.

Table 9

Question 7: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Creative	6.15
Eager	3.08
Optimistic	3.08
Willingness	3.08
Ambitious	1.54

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers are creative*. Participants shared many positive traits, but creative was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated, "I believe alternative certified teachers are eager to learn, optimistic, creative." Participant A6 added, "Many alternative certified teachers are creative, enthusiastic, and excited about earning their certification credentials and becoming a classroom teacher." Participant A4 stated, "Alternative certified teachers have positive energy, a willingness to learn, and the ability to develop innovative and creative experiences for students." Additionally, Participant A5 shared, "Alternative certified program teachers made a non-traditional decision to become educators because of their lived experiences. Many provide creative experiences in their respective teaching fields and bring those experiences to the content and teaching field."

Survey Question 8

What attributes do alternative certified teachers bring to the school?

Question 8 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers' attributes to the school community, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers' attributes and their strengths. Table 10 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were hard-working, innovative, experience, and expertise.

Table 10

Question 8: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Hard-working	6.67
Innovative	5.00
Experience	3.33
Expertise	1.67

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers are hard-working*. Participants shared many attributes of the alternative certified teacher, but hard working was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated, "Alternative certified teachers have many different attributes, but I have noticed they a sense of professionalism from prior career experiences. In addition, they are hard-working trying to get the job done." Participant A2 added, "They have a positive attitude, and they are hard-working. They love to help out." Participant A6 stated, "Many alternative certified teachers are hard-working and come from the business world, so they come with other work experience, that many times, aids them in having grit to not give up even when challenged." Additionally, Participant A5 shared, "I believe alternative certified teacher bring innovation to the teaching. Many bring innovation due to non-educational professional experiences. They are hard-working and can

think outside of the box because their view is sometimes not narrowed by educational hierarchy.”

Survey Question 9

Out of the content areas of math, science, English, social studies, or career technical education (CTE), which content area do you feel alternative certified teacher are most knowledgeable at when in the classroom?

Question 9 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers’ content knowledge provided in the classroom, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers’ content knowledge and their instructional strengths. Table 11 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were CTE, English, math, and social studies.

Table 11

Question 9: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
CTE	27.78
English	11.11
Math	11.10
Social Studies	5.56

Note. Participants’ survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers brought content knowledge to the classroom*. Participants shared different content knowledge areas, but CTE was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A6 stated, “I feel alternative certified teacher have more knowledge in the classroom with the CTE content initially, if coming from the business world. Next, I would rank math as being their second area of expertise coming from the business world.” Participant A1 added, “I would say CTE because

it's predominately project-based learning with a kinesthetic teaching style. CTE teachers are basically providing an experience to students in the respected job field where they hold professional licenses." Participant A7 stated, "In my experience, out of the content areas presented I feel the CTE content is where alternative certified teachers have the most knowledge at when in the classroom." Additionally, Participant A5 shared, "CTE is particularly where alternative certified teachers shine. They are usually hired to teacher something involving their prior work experience. For example, Health Science teachers must have prior work experience in the health field and hold a medical licensure."

Survey Question 10

What pedagogical qualities do alternative certified teachers exhibit?

Question 10 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers' pedagogical skills, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers' pedagogical qualities and their strengths. Table 12 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage collaborative, reflective, adaptable, and good listeners.

Table 12

Question 10: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Collaborative	8.70
Reflective	6.52
Adaptable	4.35
Good Listeners	2.17

Note. Participants' survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers are collaborative*. Participants shared different pedagogical qualities, but collaborative

was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A5 stated, “In my experience, some have natural pedagogical qualities. Most are very collaborative and reflective in their practice.” Participant A3 added, “Alternative certified teachers are very collaborative and reflective.” Participant A1 stated, “I feel that alternative certified teachers are collaborative, reflective, and inquiry when they don’t know about different school aspects.” Additionally, Participant A6 shared, “The pedagogical qualities exhibited by an alternative certified teacher are good listeners. Moreover, they can easily adapt to various situations, are collaborative, and willing to learn.”

Survey Question 11

What prevents administrators from hiring alternative certified teachers?

Question 11 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on what prevents alternative certified teachers from getting hired, to see whether there was a relationship between hiring preventions and alternative certified teachers’ weaknesses. Table 13 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were experience, certifications, negative attitude, and narrowmindedness.

Table 13

Question 11: Survey Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Experience	5.48
Certifications	4.11
Negative Attitude	2.74
Narrowmindedness	1.37

Note. Participants’ survey responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *lack of experience prevents alternative certified teachers from being hired*. Participants shared different preventions, but experience was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 explained, “Many alternative

certified teachers lack experience with children.” Participant A2 added, “I fear they lack the experience to control a classroom and move students forward at the same time.” Participant A3 stated, “Many cannot be hired because they have difficulty passing their certification tests and lack teaching experience.” Participant A4 added, “Administrators sometimes shy away from hiring teachers in alternative certification programs because lack of teaching experience and of the quality of training the program provides the teachers.” Participant A5 shared, “There are some negative perceptions and not enough classroom experience.” Participant A6 added, “If I am hiring for a tested subject area for state of assessment, some alternative certified teachers lack the teaching experience which prevents me from hiring them for that content area.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared, “If they are from an alternative certification program and have substituted at my school, they usually lack experience or have had negative experiences with our students, so I will not hire them permanently.”

Survey Question 12

How would you rate the level of teacher effectiveness for alternative certified teachers that you have hired during their first year?

Question 12 allowed participants to provide data about their experiences with alternative teachers’ effectiveness. Participants were able to choose from low, moderate, and high for teacher performance. All participants stated they rated alternative certified teachers in their first year of being hired as moderate.

Interview Keyword(s) and Theme

Participant responses were entered into the Dedoose software, which provided the information about themes and keywords. Each word was given a weighted percentage based on frequency. All responses were entered into the appropriate node that represented the

corresponding interview questions. Theoretical data saturation was determined based on word frequency.

Table 14

Frequency of Keyword(s) Per Interview Question

Question	Keyword(s)	Frequency
1	Confidence	4
2	Experience	9
3	Passionate	7
4	Relationships	11
5	References	8
6	Professional Development	11
7	Standard	5
8	Teach for America	11
9	Weekly	11
10	Content Knowledge	12
11	Classroom Management	15
12	Asking for Help	9
13	Every Instance	6
14	30 Minutes	10
15	Data	15
16	Professional Development	13
17	More Teachers	10
18	Support	14
19	Developed	9
20	Successful	4

Nodes helped me organize the data and assisted in the identification of themes and common words from each respondent. In identifying themes and common word frequency, I was able to highlight a given section within a node and run a word frequency query. The query produced a detailed analysis of each word selected and assigned it a weighted percentage. Respondents' detailed responses were entered into each node, which allowed for a direct quote analysis and further exploration of participants' experiences on alternative certified teachers

when hired at the secondary level. Each question yielded a different frequency (see Table 14).

Qualitative Analysis Results by Interview Question

Interview Question 1

What are the key components you look for when hiring a teacher?

Probing: Do these components look differently if they are from an alternative certification program?

Question 1 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their beliefs of key components when hiring teachers, to see whether there was a relationship between the components and teacher strengths. The probing question allowed me to identify whether there was a relationship between traditional and alternative certified teacher strengths. All participants stated there were no differences in the key components between teachers from alternative certification programs. Table 15 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were confidence, self-reflective, ownership, content knowledge, and experience.

Table 15

Question 1: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Confidence	3.83
Self-reflective	2.55
Ownership	2.10
Content Knowledge	1.70
Experience	1.28

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *they looked for confidence when hiring teachers*. Participants shared different key components, but confidence was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A2 stated, "The first key component is confidence. In the

interview, I think that's the easiest thing to identify. When you're trying to build someone's self-confidence as well as from an instructional standpoint, that is really hard." Participant A1 added, "I always look for confidence. I also ask them a question in the interview related to what they do for stress because education is a tough profession. Those are two of the things I look for straight off the bat." Participant A3 stated, "I look for teachers who have confidence, are coachable, open to receive constructive feedback, and someone who is open to learning." Additionally, Participant A6 shared, "I look for teachers who are passionate about what they do and have confidence in themselves. Teachers who have some type of experience working with the population of students at my campus is also a plus."

Interview Question 2

What characteristics are most important when hiring an effective alternative certified teacher?

Question 2 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their beliefs regarding characteristics they felt were important when hiring and effective alternative certified teachers, to see whether there was a relationship between characteristics and alternative certified teachers' strengths. Table 16 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were experience, adaptable, grit, and growth minded.

Table 16

Question 2: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Experience	2.95
Adaptable	2.62
Grit	2.30
Growth Minded	1.97

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *experience was the most important characteristic that allowed alternative certified teachers to be effective*. Participants shared different characteristics that make alternative certified teachers effective, but experience was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A7 stated, “I look for someone who’s passionate and has experience, but I also look for someone who’s willing to actually learn because I know that they may be coming in from a different field.” Participant A1 added, “I look for someone who has different classroom, instructional, or life experiences. Ultimately, I want someone that’s an adaptable team player; someone that’s a good fit at the campus that has technology skills, and that loves kids.” Participant A3 stated, “When hiring an effective alternative certified teacher, I kind of look at the program. I found that if the program is very structured and they have experience with professional development it gives the teachers a good foundation.” Additionally, Participant A4 shared, “I think being trainable and adaptable are characteristics that are most important when hiring alternative certified teachers. I want someone who is going to be a mentor to students. They really don’t have to have much experience.”

Interview Question 3

When hiring an alternative certified teacher, how many qualities and/or characteristics need to be met before a job offer is made?

Question 3 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on how many qualities or characteristic an alternative certified teacher needed to meet before being offered a job, to see whether there was a relationship between a certain number of qualities and alternative certified teachers’ strengths. Table 17 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were passionate, experience, innovative, and relational.

Table 17

Question 3: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Passionate	2.61
Experience	2.24
Innovative	1.87
Relational	1.49

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *there was not a certain number of qualities that need to be met to offer a job*. All participants did not feel there were a certain number of qualities that needed to be met to offer a job. Participants shared different qualities an alternative certified teacher must encompass to get a job, but passionate was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A3 stated,

I do not necessarily know if there's a set number of qualities an individual must have to be offered a job. I believe passion for teaching is important. If a candidate is passionate and shows their passion that is important to me.

Participant A6 added, "If I'm looking at a teacher who's passionate, I'm looking at a teacher who has the life and work experience of what they're coming to teach." Participant A4 stated, "The desire to build relationships and being passionate with students are important characteristics I look for when hiring. I don't think there is a number that I would put to characterizing how I would hire an alternative certified teacher." Additionally, Participant A2 shared,

I do not think they have to meet a certain number of characteristics. I think they have to be passionate and willing to show that they are a better candidate than the person that went through a traditional route. I have hired several alternatives, and they end up being better performers instructionally than some of my people that went through a traditional.

Interview Question 4

What pedagogical qualities are necessities for an alternative certified teacher?

Question 4 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative

certified teachers' pedagogical skills, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers' pedagogical qualities and their strengths. Table 18 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were build relationships, reflective, collaborative, and adaptable.

Table 18

Question 4: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Build Relationships	3.12
Reflective	2.56
Collaborative	1.99
Adaptable	1.70

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *the ability to build relationships is a necessity for alternative certified teachers*. Participants shared different pedagogical qualities, but relationships were the most frequently used keyword. Participant A7 stated, "I think the pedagogical qualities that are important is making sure that they are innovative, creative, and able to build relationships. I also think they need to be able to reflect on their learning." Participant A2 added, "I think it's important to have a connection and be able to build relationships with the community because they're going to be working with the students, the parents, and other teacher in different events." Participant A1 stated, "I would also say, definitely, in this society right now they have to be a transformational leader, so they have to be innovative. They have to be inspirational and build relationships." Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

For me, the biggest thing is building relationships because I tend to work at Title I schools. I can have a teacher who knows the most content out of anybody on campus, but if they don't know how to build relationships with those students, it's not going to be heard. The information is not going to be retained, and the students won't respect them.

Interview Question 5

What recruitment strategies do you use to obtain alternative certified teachers?

Question 5 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of recruitment strategies, to see whether there was a relationship between recruitment strategies and alternative certified teachers' strengths. Table 19 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were references, teacher certification, fit, and conversations.

Table 19

Question 5: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
References	2.47
Teacher Certification	2.16
Fit	1.85
Conversations	1.54

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *utilization of references aided in obtaining alternative certified teachers*. Participants shared different recruitment strategies, but references were the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated, "I definitely want to have a great relationship with the universities, your colleges and partnerships. I definitely like to have recommendations and references from their professor, so those are some of the recruitment strategies." Participant A2 added, "If they submit a resume, I go through the same format with their resume the way I do a traditional certified teacher. I look for their sequence of events. I look for the references." Participant A5 stated, "I like to check references. The one thing I've noticed about alternate certified teachers is that they tend to put a lot of their friends as references, so I like to also check for professional references and steady employment." Additionally, Participant A7 shared, "Number one, I have to make sure that they're in some type

of alternative certification program, because they will need a reference letter to say that they can even come into the teaching field.”

Interview Question 6

What resources and support do you need when hiring alternative certified teachers?

Question 6 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers’ and the resources or supports needed for them to be successful, to see whether there was a relationship between needed support and alternative certified teachers’ weaknesses. Table 20 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were professional development, coaching, curriculum, and shadowing.

Table 20

Question 6: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Professional Development	2.33
Coaching	1.81
Curriculum	1.55
Shadowing	1.30

Note. Participants’ interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers needed additional professional development support*. Participants shared different supports they felt were necessary they needed for alternative certified teachers, but professional development was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A2 stated, “I would say I need a lot of support. I think they lack a lot of professional development because they didn’t go the traditional teacher route, so I would definitely say I need support with providing professional development opportunities.” Participant A3 added,

Many alternative certified teachers lack training, so I need support with providing professional development. I think it would be beneficial if programs gave administrators the opportunity to sit in on sessions because I don't think many teachers get professional development.

Participant A5 stated, "If I could get support of someone coming in shadowing them once every 3 weeks and providing feedback would be helpful. The professional development would focus on maximizing their time, classroom management, and pacing in the classroom." Participant A1 added, "I say a lot of support with professional development. When it comes to alternative certified teachers, they are trying to learn several things at the same time such as: content, the lesson cycle, classroom management, and pacing." Additionally, Participant A7 shared, "I could use support from their field supervisor. I think they should be mentoring, coaching, and providing ongoing professional development in the areas alternative certified teachers need growth."

Interview Question 7

Is there a different process you go through to hire alternative certified teachers?

Probing: Are there any problems with these processes?

Question 7 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers' hiring process, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers' hiring process and their weaknesses.

Table 21

Question 7: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Standard	1.34
Protocol	1.30
Policy	1.16
District	1.06

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Table 21 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were standard, protocol, policy, and district.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative teachers go through no different process when being hired*. All participants stated they do not use a different process when hiring alternative certified teachers, and they felt there was nothing wrong with the current process. Participant A5 stated, “There is not a different process. We use the standard protocol that the district provides, and I don’t feel there is any problem with the process.” Participant A7 added, “No, I go through the same standard process that I go through for regular teachers. Well, not regular teachers, but teachers who come from traditional programs. There is nothing wrong with the district process.” Participant A1 stated, “I wouldn’t really necessarily say there is a different process. I go through standard protocols to hire alternative certified teachers. I make sure to work with human resources for all candidates to be fair.” Additionally, Participant A2 shared,

No, there is not a different process I go through when hiring alternative certified teachers. I follow the standard school district policies that come out of the human resources department. Currently, I do not see any problems with these policies.

Interview Question 8

Are there specific alternative certification programs you look for when hiring alternative certified teachers?

Question 8 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with alternative certified teacher programs, to see whether there was a relationship between the programs and the alternative certified teachers’ strengths. Table 22 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were Teach for America, iTeach Texas, Texas Teachers, and reputation.

Table 22

Question 8: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Teach for America	3.05
iTeach Texas	2.03
Texas Teachers	1.52
Reputation	1.27

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *Teach for America alternative certification program provided quality teachers*. Participants shared different their experiences with different alternative certified programs but Teach for America was the most frequently mentioned program. Participant A3 stated, “We are not a Teach for America district. However, I know that if we had the opportunity to hire Teach for America’s candidates, I would definitely hire them based on my prior knowledge of working with them.” Participant A4 added, “In Teach for America, they participate for two or three years. Because of the dedication, their supervisors or management pour into them. They become very committed to not only to the program but to the students they serve.” Participant A1 stated, “I definitely look for specific programs like Texas Teachers, any ISD programs, either Regional Service Centers, Teach for America, or programs that have good results and provide coaching and a consistent supervisor.” Additionally, Participant A6 shared,

I like teachers who were in the Teach for America program. The professional development that they receive is very conventional and relatable. A lot of professional development is related to students, urban students, which I think serves my school population.

Interview Question 9

How often do you evaluate alternative certified teachers work?

Question 9 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with

evaluating alternative certified teacher, to see whether there was a relationship between evaluations and performance satisfaction. Table 23 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were weekly, multiple times, various, and formal.

Table 23

Question 9: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Weekly	3.49
Multiple Times	3.17
Various	2.22
Formal	1.90

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers are evaluated more than other teachers*. Participants shared how often they evaluated alternative certified teachers, and weekly was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated,

Alternative certified teachers are usually assigned a mentor in addition to their alternative certified representative from their program. Then they are also assigned a mentor on my campus, so I would definitely say that they get mentored and evaluated weekly.

Participant A3 added, "Throughout the year, I spend a lot of time in the classrooms with alternative certified teachers coaching on a weekly basis. The coaching starts with classroom management because they don't have the skills to manage their students." Participant A4 stated, "I try to do a weekly walkthrough with the alternative certified teachers. I do a formal evaluation usually in the fall, and I would do a follow-up in the spring to give them some feedback."

Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I tend to do classroom walk-throughs no matter if you're alternative, traditional, or been in the school for a long time. I tend to do weekly evaluations, and I try to make sure that

there's equity in my classroom walk-throughs.

Interview Question 10

What areas of reinforcement do alternative certified teacher most often exhibit on their TTESS evaluation?

Question 10 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers' evaluations, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers' evaluation areas of reinforcement and their strengths. Table 24 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were Domain 2.2 Content Knowledge, Domain 3.3: Classroom Culture, Domain 1: Instruction, and Domain 2: Planning.

Table 24

Question 10: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Domain 2.2: Content Knowledge	3.32
Domain 3.3: Classroom Culture	2.21
Domain 1: Instruction	1.85
Domain 2: Planning	1.48

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers' major area of reinforcement is content knowledge on T-TESS evaluations*. Participants shared different T-TESS areas of reinforcement, but Domain 2.2: Classroom Knowledge was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 revealed,

I feel like they tend to exhibit more of content knowledge, especially if they're coming from the field that they're teaching. If I am working with a teacher who teaches science, and they are biologist, they have that content knowledge.

Participant A2 expressed, "I think the areas of strength is content knowledge because they have gone through different trainings and usually have specific degrees in those content areas that they

teach to students.” Participant A3 stated, “In my experience, they definitely most often have strengths in the classroom content. They tend to know everything about their area of expertise and always want to focus on that part of teaching.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I feel alternative certified teachers score high in Domain 2.2: Content Knowledge when they teach CTE. I believe having a prior work experience in the health field and teaching Health Science or being a mechanic and teaching automotive classes comes natural.

Interview Question 11

What areas of refinement do alternative certified teacher most often exhibit on their TTESS evaluation?

Question 11 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers’ evaluations, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers’ evaluation areas of refinement and their weaknesses. Table 25 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were classroom management, time management, expectations, and lessons.

Table 25

Question 11: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Classroom Management	3.76
Time Management	2.00
Expectations	1.75
Lessons	1.50

Note. Participants’ interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers’ major area of refinement is classroom management on T-TESS evaluations.*

Participants shared different T-TESS areas of reinforcement, but classroom management was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A6 stated, “I feel that the core root cause of their area

of refinement is dealing with classroom management, routines, and procedures. If they spend time getting that down, then they don't spend so much time managing the behavior." Participant A1 added, "I would say Domain 3, dealing with classroom management needs some refinement. They have to kind of get the flow of the classroom and making sure the kids know what the rules are and what the expectations are in the classroom." Participant A7 stated, "Classroom management is a major area of refinement. Alternative certified teachers come in and they think they have to be these kids' friends because they don't have the proper training." Participant A2 added, "For me their area of refinement, is generally classroom management, and that generally breaks or makes an alternative certified teacher." Additionally, Participant A5 shared, "A lot of times, I say when you have an alternative teacher in the classroom who is struggling, it is normally because of the classroom management. Not much can happen until the teacher has a solid classroom management foundation."

Interview Question 12

What barriers do you encounter when working with alternative certified teachers?

Question 12 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences on barriers when working with alternative certified teachers, to see whether there was a relationship between barriers and alternative certified teachers' weaknesses.

Table 26

Question 12: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Ask for Help	2.98
Program	2.65
Certification	1.99
Instruction	1.66
Mindset	1.32

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Table 26 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were ask for help, program, certification, and instruction.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *asking for help is the primary barrier alternative certified teachers encounter*. Participants shared different barriers, but not asking for help was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A2 stated,

I feel they have barriers, but not intentional barrier on their part. It's just one of those things of just making sure that they ask for help. Some asked for help, but then sometimes they wait too late to ask.

Participant A1 added, "I believe a major barrier is they actually wait too late to ask for help.

Then they get overwhelmed with everything and usually they burnout and breakdown."

Participant A6 stated, "In my experience, really asking for help is a big barrier. If they would ask for help with things, I can help them internalize and practice. I think it just really all comes back to the lesson cycle." Participant A3 added,

Depending on the size of the alternative certification program, they necessarily may not get their mentor to come to your campus much because they are spread too thin, which is a big barrier I encounter working with alternative certified teachers.

Additionally, Participant A5 shared,

Some of the barriers I encounter when working with alternative certified teachers is, they think they know a lot when it comes to their content area. Although, a lot of them have the skills and content knowledge. They are afraid to ask for help.

Interview Question 13

How often do you discuss student outcomes when coaching alternative certified teachers?

Question 13 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers' student outcomes discussions, to see whether there was a relationship between student outcomes discussions and satisfactory performance. Table 27

provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were every interaction, weekly, conversations, and goals.

Table 27

Question 13: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Every Interaction	3.00
Weekly	2.50
Conversations	2.00
Goals	1.50

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *participants frequently discussed student outcomes with alternative certified teachers*. Participants shared different times they discussed student outcomes, but every interaction they had with alternative certified was the most frequently used time. Participant A2 stated, "Every interaction I have a conversation with alternative certified teachers, I talk about student outcomes. My leadership style is based on what they are doing to meet students' needs, so they don't take it personal." Participant A1 added, "The T-TESS requires all teachers to submit goals. Teachers are required to develop a professional goal. I challenge them to make goals about student outcomes, so I can talk about outcomes every interaction I get with the teacher." Participant A7 stated, "I talk about student outcomes every interaction I get with a teacher and especially on a weekly basis during PLC meetings. In the meeting that's mainly all we discuss is student data and student outcomes." Participant A6 added, "Every year I set a quota of how many times I formally talk about student outcomes, and I go well over the projection. I find myself talking about student outcomes every interaction I get with alternative certified teachers." Additionally, Participant A5 shared, "I

discuss student outcomes every interaction I have a conversation with a teacher, whether she is alternative certified or not. If they are unable to explain and provide evidence of the students being successful, I start coaching them.”

Interview Question 14

When you meet with an alternative certified teacher you coach, how long are your meetings, typically?

Question 14 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers’ and time spent on teacher development, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers’ coaching meetings and satisfactory performance. Table 28 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were 30 minutes, coaching, plan, and evidence.

Table 28

Question 14: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
30 Minutes	4.74
Coaching	2.37
Plan	1.90
Evidence	1.42

Note. Participants’ interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *participants meet regularly with alternative certified teachers to coach them for at least 30 minutes*. Participants shared different time lengths for their coaching sessions, but 30 minutes was the most frequently time mentioned. Participant A3 stated,

I would say at least 30 minutes because I’m going through the process to discuss how they planned and determined if the instruction was successful. I like for alternative teachers to provide evidence to show it was a successful lesson.

Participant A5 added,

I will say about 30 to 45 minutes for alternative certified teachers. However, if it's a really detailed coaching session that I must go through, I may just hire a substitute teacher and work with that teacher for an hour.

Participant A1 stated,

My coaching meetings are about 30 minutes a session. When I am coaching, I probe and get them to give me answers. Alternative certified teachers may not have much teaching experience, so they may need more time to answer questions.

Participant A4 added, "If it is after a formal observation for an alternative certified teacher, then probably about 30 minutes minimum to kind of really walk through, talk through the things that I saw, give feedback, see if they have any questions." Additionally, Participant A7 shared, "I don't coach anyone longer than 30 minutes. The 30 minutes would consist of us starting out with celebrations. Before I have the alternative certified teacher identify what they think the struggles are in their class."

Interview Question 15

How do you determine when an alternative certified teacher has academically impacted student learning?

Question 15 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers' academic impact on student learning, to see whether there was a relationship between student learning impacts and satisfactory performance.

Table 29

Question 15: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Data	4.53
Student Success	2.72
Relationships	2.42
Assessments	2.11
Academics	1.81

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Table 29 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were data, student success, relationships, assessments, and academics.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *participants were satisfied with alternative certified teachers' performance when their data showed they impacted student learning*. Participants shared different ways alternative certified teachers showed they impacted student learning, but data was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated,

I would definitely say from the data. The data tells a story, so I see it in the test scores and on the report cards. I see it also when parents are speaking with me about the alternative certified teachers.

Participant A3 added,

The main thing that I look at is student data. I look at student data from district assessments, common assessments, and the teacher's failure rates to determine student's success and the academic impact alternative certified teachers are making with students.

Participant A5 stated,

For me, academic impact is based on data and how students perform on the STAAR test. In addition to the number of students who passed the STAAR, I look at the number of students identified as GT in the teacher's classroom.

Participant A6 added, "In my opinion, data is the measure of teacher success when it comes to student academics. I often tell my general and alternative certified teachers nine times out of 10

the numbers do not lie." Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

The first thing I go to, look at, is the data. Then I view their relationships with the students. A lot of times, instruction cannot happen until the students believe that the teacher cares about him or her academic success.

Interview Question 16

What type of support or training do feel alternative certified teachers need to be successful in the classroom?

Question 16 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences

regarding necessary supports needed for alternative certified teachers to be successful, to see whether there was a relationship between training and alternative certified teachers' weaknesses. Table 30 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were professional development, lessons, mentoring, and instructional.

Table 30

Question 16: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Professional Development	2.86
Lessons	1.95
Mentoring	1.80
Instructional	1.50

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *participants believed alternative certified teachers needed additional professional development*. Participants shared different supports they felt were necessary for alternative certified teachers to be successful in the classroom, but professional development was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated,

Definitely professional development because many times they lack classroom management skills. There are several trainings and professional development opportunities through Regional Service Centers. In addition, campus support from cultural responsive teachers would be something that I would highly recommend.

Participant A2 added, "There will be some refreshers that they need because there's so much information thrown at them at the beginning. They may need professional development chopped up into several different days throughout the year." Participant A3 stated,

I think the programs should provide them intense professional development on the lesson cycle. I am a big proponent of the Madeline Hunter Lesson Cycle, so for an alternative teacher to be successful, training on the lesson cycle is necessary.

Participant A4 added, “The biggest difference that a traditional teacher gets is ongoing professional development. They get on the job training because they have a student teaching residency, so I think the most important need is professional development on the lesson cycle.”

Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I think alternative certified teachers need more than just the regional training centers’ professional development. I think they need continuous training from their school administration. As part of T-TESS, they can develop a plan at the beginning of the year.

Interview Question 17

In what way has District of Innovation contributed to the hiring of alternative certified teachers?

Question 17 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with the district’s other hiring models, to see whether there was a relationship between the model and alternative teachers’ advantages. Table 31 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were more teachers, classroom, different, and guidelines.

Table 31

Question 17: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
More Teachers	2.78
Classroom	2.50
Different	2.22
Guidelines	1.94

Note. Participants’ interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *District of Innovation contributed to the hiring of more alternative certified teachers*. Participants shared different thought around the influence that District of Innovation had on hiring, but more teachers were the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated, “Definitely District of Innovation,

allows for more teachers in CTE who are alternative certified. For example, my culinary arts teacher. It is great to have a chef, who had a restaurant then interested in teaching as a career path.” Participant A3 added, “I feel District of Innovation has allowed districts to hire more teachers who are alternative certified and have been in a certain field for quite some time and allow them to come into the classroom and provide instruction to students.” Participant A2 stated, “From an Alt-Cert perspective, I think District of Innovation has really helped them secure employment in the education field because they are able to teach Career Tech Education at the high school level.” Participant A5 added, “I think it plays a role in hiring more teachers with alternative certification, because it’s kind of been advertised as a way for people in the business world to have the opportunity to come into the field of education.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared, “When it comes to math, science, CTE, and bilingual programs, we get more teachers who are alternative certified. I think District of Innovation has really impacted teacher shortage because we are able to hire in hard to fill areas.”

Interview Question 18

What influence if any might an administrator’s route to certification have on their decision to hire alternative certified teachers?

Question 18 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on administrators’ route to certification and hiring alternative certified teachers, to see whether there was a relationship between administrators’ route to certification and perceived satisfactory performance of alternative certified teachers. Table 32 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were support, chance, person, and opportunity.

Table 32

Question 18: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Support	3.20
Chance	2.93
Person	2.40
Opportunity	1.60

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *administrators' route to certification influenced hiring decisions*. Participants shared different administrators' perspectives on hiring practices, but support was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated,

I think it plays a critical role. I look for alternative teacher because I was alternatively certified and want to provide support. I am successful in my career. I went on to be an administrator and worked in Central Office.

Participant A2 added,

An administrator's route to certification definitely has an impact on whether principals hire a traditional or nontraditional teacher. Some current principals went through the alternative certification route, and I believe they support and have no problem hiring alternative certified teachers.

Participant A3 stated,

I think that it plays a role in it. If a person started off as an alternative certification teacher or even coming into the field through alternative certification, I think that many are more open to support alternative certified teachers.

Participant A4 added, "I think it definitely plays an important role. I think sometimes, if a person was not alternatively certified, principals see it in a negative way, and sometimes they are not open to support or hire alternative certified teachers." Additionally, Participant A7 shared, "I think it just depends on the person, but I also think based on their own experience, it can really impact who they hire. Title I schools tend to support and hire alternative certified teachers

because they need teachers.”

Interview Question 19

Compared to traditional certified teachers that you have hired, were you satisfied with alternative certified teachers’ performances in their first-year teaching at your campus?

Probing: Were they effective or ineffective?

Question 19 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of alternative certified teachers’ performance in their first year on campus teaching, to see whether there was a relationship between alternative certified teachers’ first-year performance and satisfactory performance. Table 33 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were developed, changed, good, and classroom.

Table 33

Question 19: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Developed	2.24
Changed	1.99
Good	1.74
Classroom	1.49

Note. Participants’ interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers’ performance are effective after being developed during their first year of teaching at the campus*. Participants shared different thoughts about alternative teachers’ performance during their first year. Developed was the most frequently used keyword. All the participants but one stated they were satisfied with alternative certified teachers that they hired performances in the first year compared to traditional certified teachers. Participant A1 stated, “Being reflective and willing to go back and take the pieces and apply the new learning developed my alternative

certified teachers into superior teachers over their peers. If they are not reflective and receptive, they are going to struggle.” Participant A3 added, “I think what makes them effective is that they were open to learn and being developed. I think that they are good team players. I think they are willing to hear constructive criticism and not necessarily take it personally.” Participant A2 stated, “I’ve seen them blossom and develop their craft in the classroom. In my book, professional development and ongoing trainings made the teacher alternative teachers effective.” Participant A6 added, “Teachers who are in the Teach for America are constantly provided professional development. They are developed to be great teachers because someone is always providing them with immediate feedback and coming back to see if it is being implemented.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I think their enthusiasm and passion for starting something new and really wanted to make an impact on students is what makes them effective. They want to develop, be a sponge, and learn everything. I think that makes a difference.

Interview Question 20

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences with alternative certified teachers that was not covered in this interview?

Question 20 offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their overall experiences of alternative certified teachers, to see whether there was a relationship between administrators experiences with alternative certified teachers’ and their satisfactory performance.

Table 34

Question 20: Interview Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Successful	7.20
Examples	3.40
Assigned	2.40
Modeling	1.60

Note. Participants’ interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Table 34 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were successful, examples, assigned, and modeling.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified can be successful*. Participants shared different perspectives regarding alternative certified teachers.

Successful was the most frequently used keyword. Participant A1 stated,

I would just probably elaborate a little bit more on the instructional piece. I think they really need—I mean, although they are assigned a mentor, that modeling early on is really, which is really critical for them to be successful.

Participant A2 added, “Alternative certified teachers really need current and diverse examples of what good teaching is for the setting and they usually turn out to be successful.”

Participant A3 stated, “I do notice what I must do more with alternative certified teachers is praise them more for small things to allow them to see they are doing some stuff right to be a successful teacher.” Participant A4 added, “I praise alternative certified teachers immediately when I see something, they are doing something right when it comes from an instructional standpoint because they are being successful with meeting academic goals.” Additionally,

Participant A5 shared,

I think that it is important to be sure that alternative certified teachers are qualified. The district needs to make sure they are giving them the support they need to move forward and go on to have a successful career.

Narrative Inquiry Keyword(s) and Theme

Participant responses were entered into the Dedoose software, which provided the information about themes and keywords. Each word was given a weighted percentage based on frequency. All responses were entered into the appropriate node that represented the corresponding narrative inquiry response. Theoretical data saturation was determined based on

word frequency.

Nodes helped me organize the data and assisted in the identification of themes and common words from each respondent. In identifying themes and common word frequency, I was able to highlight a given section within a node and run a word frequency query. The query produced a detailed analysis of each word selected and assigned it a weighted percentage. Respondents' detailed responses were entered into each node, which allowed for a direct quote analysis and further exploration of participants' experiences on their career and route to certification. This narrative identified the participants personal route to certification. Frequency for the keyword "mentor" in narrative inquiry was 37.

Qualitative Analysis Results by Narrative Inquiry

Narrative Inquiry Data: Tell the story of your experiences of becoming a certified teacher. Include from the time you were hired to where you are now. Feel free to share specific experiences, both good and bad.

The narrative inquiry offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences through their career and becoming certified, to see whether there was a relationship between personal experiences and satisfactory performance. Table 35 provides the weighted percentages based on a word frequency analysis in Dedoose. The keywords in order based on weighted percentage were mentor, success, opportunity, and professional development.

Table 35

Narrative Inquiry Keywords

Keyword(s)	Weighted %
Mentor	1.71
Success	1.57
Opportunity	1.34
Professional Development	1.16

Note. Participants' interview responses acted as the unit of analysis.

Examination of keywords provided a theme for this question: *alternative certified teachers can be successful if they have a mentor*. Participants shared different personal experiences with becoming a certified teacher. Mentor was the most frequently used keyword.

Participant A1 stated,

I enrolled in HISD's Alternative Certification Program, which actually turned out to be a blessing for me. I did the program within two years and had a mentor who was my co-teacher. I had some success and received a bonus.

Participant A2 added, "I had a lot of growth in my classroom amongst my students when having a mentor and receiving the opportunity of be provided professional development, which propelled me and highlighted me to my principal at the time." Participant A3 stated,

I had a mentor, and we worked really well together. After I showed success, my principal created a position for me. I was the Special Education Coordinator who I worked directly with co-teachers coaching them so that students would succeed.

Participant A4 added:

I have had the privilege of serving students from various backgrounds. My "why" has not changed since I entered the classroom and having a mentor. I continue to be of service to others, so they too can be successful.

Participant A5 stated, "I had a lot of support from my mentor teacher. He was there every week to make sure that I was moving forward. He was very supportive. I went on to complete my student teaching, graduate, and was hired." Participant A6 added,

I had a female mentor as my certification officer in my alternative certified program who went on to have a very successful career as an assistant superintendent and interim superintendent of a neighboring school district. Her preparation really helped me.

Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I went into an alternative certified program and was accepted into the Dallas ISD program. The program had rigorous coursework through Texas Woman's University over the summer. I think my program, very well prepared me because of the mentor professors.

Theme Identification

Several themes emerged after the keyword identification. Nodes created using the Dedoose qualitative data analysis tool allowed me to identify themes. Participants' responses were entered into the appropriate node as received, a word query was conducted, and saturation occurred as seven individuals completed surveys, one-on-one interviews, and narrative inquiry responses. All node word queries were viewed, and themes were identified. Each theme represented data retrieved from specific questions.

Research Question 1: Hard-Working and Content Knowledge

This question asked, "What are alternative certified teachers' strengths?" The related themes are presented in Table 36, organized by the frequency of the response, as indicated by the classification of the research instrument that correlated with the research question.

Table 36

Research Question 1: Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification	Question
Alternative certified teachers are hard-working	Survey	8
CTE is the most knowledgeable content area	Survey	9
Collaborative	Survey	10
Creative	Survey	7
Alternative certified teachers have content knowledge	Interview	10
Build relationships	Interview	3
Real world work experience	Interview	2
References	Interview	5
Passionate	Interview	3

Theme 1 was identified through theoretical saturation of keywords and phrases identified in the Dedoose program. Based on participant responses, saturation showed a word frequency from seven participants. All seven participants had responses from the instruments that included

the words hard-working or content knowledge. For example, Participant A1 explained, “Alternative certified teachers have many different attributes, but I have noticed a sense of professionalism from a prior career experience. In addition, they are hard-working trying to get the job done.”

Participant A2 added, “They have a positive attitude, and they are hard-working. They love to help out.” Participant A3 stated, “Alternative certified teachers are typically second-career teachers who are hard-working and bring very specific expertise.” Participant A4 added, “Alternative certified teachers are usually the most hard-working teachers in the building. They try to go above and beyond for students to show their area of expertise.” Participant A5 shared, “I believe alternative certified teacher bring innovation to the teaching. Many bring innovation due to non-educational professional experiences. They are hard-working and can think outside the box because their view is sometimes not narrowed by educational hierarchy.” Participant A6 added, “Many alternative certified teachers are hard-working and come from the business world, so they come with other work experience, that many times, aids them in having grit to not give up even when challenged.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared, “Many alternative certified teachers are hard workers. They continue to work on their craft the whole year to be successful.”

Individual interview responses revealed the state evaluation tool, T-TESS, showed alternative certified teachers’ major strengths is their content knowledge. Participant A1 revealed,

I feel like they tend to exhibit more content knowledge, especially if they’re coming from the field that they’re teaching. If I am working with a teacher who teaches science, and they are a biologist, they have that content knowledge.

Participant A2 expressed, “I think the areas of strength is content knowledge because they have gone through different trainings and usually have specific degrees in those content areas that they

teach to students.” Participant A3 stated, “In my experience, they definitely most often have strengths in the classroom content. They tend to know everything about their area of expertise and always want to focus on that part of teaching.” Participant A4 added, “I would say that alternative certified teachers’ area of reinforcement would fall under content knowledge, which plays a major part in professional learning community meetings.” Participant A5 added, “I believe their content knowledge ultimately leads to how alternative certified teachers build relationships with their students making them score high on this area of the T-TESS evaluation.” Participant A6 added, “An area of strength for them is contributing to the campus. However, the main area of reinforcement they score the highest on with T-TESS is their knowledge of the content they are teaching.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I feel alternative certified teachers score high in Domain 2.2: Content Knowledge when they teach CTE. I believe having prior work experience in the health field and teaching Health Science or being a mechanic and teaching automotive classes comes natural.

Research Question 2: Teaching Experience and Classroom Management

This question asked, “What are alternative certified teachers’ weaknesses?” The related themes are presented in Table 37, organized by the frequency of the response, as indicated by the classification of the research instrument that correlated with the research question.

Table 37

Research Question 2: Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification	Question
Alternative Certified Teachers Lack Teaching Experience	Survey	11
Classroom Management	Interview	11
Ongoing Professional Development is needed	Interview	16
Lack Professional Development	Interview	6
Asking for help	Interview	12

Theme 2 was identified through theoretical saturation of keywords and phrases identified in the Dedoose program. Based on participant responses, saturation showed a word frequency from seven participants. All seven participants had responses from the instruments that included the words teaching experience or classroom management. For example, Participant A1 explained, “Many alternative certified teachers lack experience with children.” Participant A2 added, “I fear they lack the experience to control a classroom and move students forward at the same time.” Participant A3 stated, “Many cannot be hired because they have difficulty passing their certification tests and lack teaching experience.” Participant A4 added, “Administrators sometimes shy away from hiring teachers in alternative certification programs because of lack of teaching experience and the quality of training the program provides the teachers.” Participant A5 shared, “There are some negative perceptions and not enough classroom experience.” Participant A6 added, “If I am hiring for a tested subject area for state of assessment, some alternative certified teachers lack the teaching experience which prevents me from hiring them for that content area.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared, “If they are from an alternative certification program and have substituted at my school, they usually lack experience or have had negative experiences with our students, so I will not hire them permanently.”

Individual interview responses revealed the state evaluation tool T-TESS showed alternative certified teachers’ major weaknesses was classroom management. Participant A1 revealed,

I would say Domain 3 dealing with classroom management needs some refinement. They have to kind of, get the flow of the classroom, and making sure the kids know what the rules are, and what the expectations are in the classroom.

Participant A2 expressed, “For me their area of refinement, is generally classroom management, and that generally breaks or makes an alternative certified teacher.” Participant A3 stated, “when

the foundation of classroom management is not there for alternative certified teachers, then student achievement expectations sometimes lag.” Participant A4 added,

Most of the time, they have the knowledge and the skills, but they lack in the area of classroom management and getting the lessons across to the students to where they stay engaged. Ultimately, student behavior is a major concern.

Participant A5 added, “A lot of times, I say when you have an alternative teacher in the classroom who’s struggling, it is normally because of the classroom management. Not much can happen until the teacher has a solid classroom management foundation.” Participant A6 added, “I feel that the core root cause of their area of refinement is dealing with the classroom management, routines, and procedures. If they spend time getting that down, then they don’t spend so much time managing the behavior.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared, “Classroom management is a major area of refinement. Alternative certified teachers come in and they think they have to be these kids’ friends because they don’t have the proper training.”

Research Question 3: Secondary Administrators are Satisfied with Alternative Certified Teachers’ Performance When They had Good Data and Were Provided a Mentor

This question asked, “Are administrators satisfied with the alternative certified teachers’ performance?” The related themes were presented in Table 38, organized by the frequency of the response, as indicated by the classification of the research instrument that correlated with the research question.

Theme 2 was identified through theoretical saturation of keywords and phrases identified in the Dedoose program. Based on the participant’s survey responses, data illustrated their experiences with alternative teachers’ effectiveness. Participants were able to choose from low, moderate, and high for teacher performance. All participants stated they rated alternative certified teachers in their first year of being hired as moderate. Saturation showed a word frequency from seven participants.

Table 38

Research Question 3: Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification	Question
Administrators are moderately satisfied with alternative certified teachers' performance during their first year	Survey	12
Administrators are satisfied with performance when alternative certified teachers have support	Interview	8
Data is used to determine performance satisfaction	Interview	15
Administrators are satisfied when alternative certified teachers are developed	Interview	19
Alternative certified teachers can be successful	Interview	20
Mentorship aids in administrators being satisfied with performance	Narrative Inquiry	1

All seven participants had responses from the individual interview and narrative inquiry instruments that included the words data or mentor. For example, Participant A1 explained,

I would definitely say from the data. The data tells a story, so I see it in the test scores and on the report cards. I see it also when parents are speaking with me about the alternative certified teachers.

Participant A2 added, "My very first year as a head principal, I hired a teacher and was satisfied with her performance because of her data. We met regularly, and she immediately started building relationships ensuring her students' test scores were the best." Participant A3 stated,

The main thing that I look at is student data. I look at student data from district assessments, common assessments, and the teacher's failure rates to determine student's success and the academic impact alternative certified teachers are making with students.

Participant A4 added, "I think if you were working with a department like English that has an end of course [EOC] connected to it, you would have to look at the student data on the EOC to make that connection for performance satisfaction." Participant A5 shared,

For me, academic impact is based on data and how students perform on the STAAR test. In addition to the number of students who passed the STAAR, I look at the number of students identified as GT in the teacher's classroom.

Participant A6 added, “In my opinion, data is the measure of teacher success when it comes to student academics. I often tell my general and alternative certified teachers nine times out of 10 the number do not lie.” Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

The first thing I go to, look at, is the data. Then I view their relationships with the students. A lot of times, instruction cannot happen until the students believe that the teacher cares about him or her academic success.

The narrative inquiry responses showed alternative certified teachers can be successful when they have a mentor. Participant A1 revealed,

I enrolled in HISD’s Alternative Certification Program, which actually turned out to be a blessing for me. I did the program within 2 years and had a mentor who was my co-teacher. I had some success and received a bonus.

Participant A2 expressed, “I had a lot of growth in my classroom amongst my students when having a mentor and receiving the opportunity of, being provided professional development, which propelled me and highlighted me to my principal at the time.” Participant A3 stated,

I had a mentor, and we worked really well together. After I showed success, my principal created a position for me. I was the Special Education Coordinator who I worked directly with co-teachers coaching them so that students would succeed.

Participant A4 added,

I have had the privilege of serving students from various backgrounds. My “why” has not changed since I entered the classroom and having a mentor. I continue to be a of service to others, so they too can be successful.

Participant A5 explained,

I had a lot of support from with my mentor teacher. He was there every week to make sure that I was moving forward. He was very supportive. I went on to complete my student teaching, graduate, and was hired.

Participant A6 added,

I had a female mentor as my certification officer in my alternative certified program who went on to have a very successful career as an assistant superintendent and interim superintendent of a neighboring school district. Her preparation really helped me.

Additionally, Participant A7 shared,

I went into an alternative certified program and was accepted into the Dallas ISD program. The program had rigorous coursework through Texas Woman's University over the summer. I think my program, very well prepared me because of the mentor professors.

Summary

Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the findings of this study. This chapter began by identifying the research questions that guided the study. An analysis of participant demographic data are also presented. The chapter includes a discussion of the data analysis and keyword identification of participants' responses based on keyword frequency reported in the Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. Participants shared their experiences hiring alternative certified teachers in Texas at the secondary level. Chapter 5 includes the study overview, discussion of the findings, significance for practice, recommendations for future study, and observations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, SIGNIFICANCE, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND OBSERVATIONS

In this chapter, a brief overview of the study and a discussion of major findings based on the data gathered in Chapter 4 is presented. Implications and recommendations for future actions that educators may consider related to the current study is also offered.

Overview of the Study

Administrators play an important role in hiring quality teachers for their schools, especially with evidence suggesting that teachers have the most impact on student achievement and learning (Donaldson, 2011; Rivkin et al., 2005; Sanders & Horn, 1998). Principals' beliefs about effective teaching are key factors in the hiring process and shape the teaching quality in their schools, which affects student achievement (Liu et al., 2015). Recent research identifies characteristics associated with effective teaching (Loeb et al., 2011; Ziebarth-Bovill et al., 2012) and principals have the responsibility of recognizing those characteristics when hiring because "each position affects students and teachers as well as other stakeholders in the school" (Ingle et al., 2011, p. 580). This phenomenological qualitative study is designed to examine secondary administrators' experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers, to answer the research questions:

1. What are alternative certified teachers' strengths?
2. What are alternative certified teachers' weaknesses?
3. Are administrators satisfied with the alternative certified teachers' performance?

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the major findings and discuss components of the conceptual framework are presented. These findings relate to each component in order to fulfill the phenomenological

research goal of detailing the essence of the experience for participants (Creswell, 2014). The information addresses the three research questions guiding the study. I researcher presents the major findings in Table 39 and additional information following the table.

Table 39

Major Findings by Conceptual Framework Components

Finding	Conceptual Framework Component
Alternative certified teachers are most knowledgeable in the CTE content area	Knowledge
Alternative certified teachers lack professional development.	Knowledge
Alternative certified teachers are creative	Skills
Lack of teaching experience prevents alternative certified teacher from getting hired	Skills
Alternative certified teachers lack classroom management	Skills
Alternative certified teachers are hard-working	Attitudes
Alternative certified teachers are passionate	Attitudes
Alternative certified teachers believe in building relationships	Beliefs
Administrators believed alternative certified teachers' student data show an impact on student learning	Beliefs
Alternative certified teachers are collaborative	Behaviors
Alternative certified teachers do not ask for help	Behaviors

There is currently a paucity of literature about school administrators' experiences when hiring alternatively certified teachers. Therefore, a study of this nature adds to the current literature. The research study examines principals' experiences on hiring alternatively certified teachers. The literature review includes principals' experiences with the impact of high-quality teaching and teacher effectiveness as a result of the hiring selection process. The current synthesis of the literature and study results provide a cohesive document that offers information to possibly increase the number of alternative certified teachers hired in the education field. Although hiring alternative certified teachers is not a new occurrence, it does require more ongoing research.

The study reveals, secondary administrators use a standard process when hiring teachers and do not deviate from the protocol when hiring alternative certified teachers. Prior research explains, the principal establishes a consistent process when looking to hire highly qualified teachers. Principals continuously review instructional processes to create a framework for teacher effectiveness when selecting qualified teacher candidates to interview and hire to focus on the goal of student instruction. Thus, teachers' previous experiences, instructional processes, and ability to establish processes are taken into consideration before deciding to hire a teacher (Brooke, 2020). Participant A5 states, "There is not a different process. I use the standard protocol that the district provides and there is no problem with the process. If I felt something needed to be changed, I would contact Human Resources with feedback."

Secondary administrators all share that alternative certified teachers building relationships has an impact on teacher effectiveness. Prior research explains, teacher quality extends beyond certification test scores and coursework. Grieve-MacDonald (2010) report the ability to build relationships, positive classroom ethos, and communication skills are also essential to being a quality teacher. Participant A7 states,

For me, the biggest thing is building relationships because they tend to work at Title I schools. I can have a teacher who knows the most content out of anybody on campus, but if they don't know how to build relationships with those students, it is going to be hard, and the information is not going to be retained.

The study also reveals, secondary administrators look for teachers who exhibit confidence when hiring. Prior research by Trammell and Aldrich (2016) provided a link to personality characteristics of instructors that lead to student learning. Trammell and Aldrich identify desirable attributes of quality teachers, as measured by students. These traits include "caring, enthusiastic, approachable, inspiring, fair, well-prepared, and helpful" (p. 17). Students view the character of a teacher as a key factor to student achievement and learning. Participant

A6 shares, “I look for teachers who are passionate about what they do and have confidence. Teachers who have these personality traits are a plus when working with the population of students at my campus.”

Secondary administrators all discuss that teacher mentoring has an impact on teacher effectiveness. Prior research explains, a mentor-mentee as an important strategy to improve teacher quality. Gugu and Olaniran (2019) state,

A mentor is a skilled individual who guides a less experienced person through a process or profession by building confidence and modelling positive behaviors in the person. An effective mentor must understand that his role is to be dependable, engaged, authentic, and tuned into the needs of the mentee. (p. 14181)

According to the Australian Department of Education and Training (2016), a pre-service teacher benefits tremendously when attached with an experienced mentor for mentoring. Participants reveal they meet with alternative certified teachers on a weekly basis and had 30-minute coaching sessions to provide feedback. Participant A3 adds, “Throughout the year, I spend a lot of time in the classrooms with alternative certified teachers coaching on a weekly basis. The coaching starts with classroom management because they don’t have the skills to manage their students.” Participant A1 states, “My coaching meetings are about 30 minutes a session. When I am coaching, I probe and get them to provide dialogue. Alternative certified teachers may not have much teaching experience, so they may need more time to ask questions.” Finally, participants reveal alternative certified teachers can be successful if they have a mentor. Participant A2 shares a personal experience by saying, “I had a lot of growth in my classroom amongst my students when having a mentor and receiving the opportunity of professional development, which propelled me and highlighted me to my principal at the time.” For the participants in this study high-quality teaching and teacher effectiveness is a direct result of the hiring selection process.

Significance of Major Findings for Practice

The major findings consist of collective responses from the three different instrument protocols I used to collect secondary administrators' responses, highlighting the alternative certified teacher's knowledge, skill, attitude, belief, and behavior components of the conceptual framework. The results of this study could influence practices for increasing teacher capacity, educator feedback, collaboration focused on improving instruction, and establishing a culture of trust. The following discussion provides the researcher's perspective on the practical implications of this study. The conceptual framework guiding the current study is presented in Table 40, to include the recommendations for interactions with all stakeholders on campus.

Table 40

Significance of Major Findings for Practice

Finding	Significance for Practice	Conceptual Framework Component
Alternative certified teachers are most knowledgeable in the CTE content area	Increase Teacher Capacity	Knowledge
Alternative certified teachers lack professional development	Increase Teacher Capacity	Knowledge
Alternative certified teachers are creative	Increase Teacher Capacity	Skills
Lack of teaching experience prevents alternative certified teacher from getting hired	Increase Teacher Capacity	Skills
Alternative certified teachers lack classroom management	Increase Teacher Capacity	Skills
Alternative certified teachers are hard-working	Educator Feedback	Attitudes
Alternative certified teachers are passionate	Educator Feedback	Attitudes
Alternative certified teachers believe in building relationships	Collaboration focused on improving instruction	Beliefs
Administrators believed alternative certified teachers' student data show an impact on student learning	Collaboration focused on improving instruction	Beliefs
Alternative certified teachers are collaborative	Establish a culture of trust	Behaviors
Alternative certified teachers do not ask for help	Establish a culture of trust	Behaviors

The results of this study may be utilized to influence an increase in building teacher

capacity. Participants note that alternative certified teachers are creative and have knowledge predominately in CTE content areas. However, the study results show alternative certified teachers lack experience, classroom management, and professional development. Schools can implement consistent professional learning communities and professional development for teachers to focus on data and student achievement. Abrams et al. (2020) states, “There is considerable alignment between teacher leadership and aims of data-informed decision making. Productive collaboration requires effective facilitation of data-based conversations, and skills in moving group discussions forward to connect interpretations and conclusions to specific instructional actions and strategies” (p. 11). When school districts focus on building teacher capacity, they can meet the needs of all learners.

Participants note that alternative certified teachers were collaborative with other teachers. However, the researcher finds alternative certified teachers do not ask administrators for help. The results of this study can be used to establish a culture of trust. It is necessary for schools to build relational trust, so alternative certified teachers have a sense of safety. Hong et al. (2020) state,

Trusting relationships seemed to help teachers effectively navigate. Four themes showed various aspects and dynamics of trusting relationships: (i) common goals and vision for students, (ii) beliefs in colleagues’ competence, (iii) emotional safety and comfort, and (iv) being vulnerable with colleagues. (p. 5)

School districts can provide a culture of trust so all teachers will begin to be more open to asking for help. The school’s culture will foster growth and ongoing communication among all stakeholders.

This study can also be utilized to influence collaboration that focuses on improving instruction. Participants noted that alternative certified teachers believe in building relationships. In addition, participants’ alternative certified teachers’ student data show an impact on student

learning. School districts can model and implement the pedagogy of collaboration as best practices. Maslo and Cronhjort (2020) state, “Collaboration is the idea, purpose and means of education, where the teacher-student relationship empowers the learners to involve themselves in learning supported by teachers. The success in learning inspires their confidence in overcoming learning difficulties and achieving success” (p. 138). School districts can increase the number of district wide professional development days. In addition, school districts can add target professional development. More school leaders can restructure master schedules, so similar content teachers can have the same planning time to collaborate. When school districts place emphasis on collaboration that focuses on student learning, student achievement will continuously happen in the classroom.

Participants also note alternative certified teachers are hard-working and passionate about different educational aspects. The results of this study can enhance educator feedback. Pedagogical qualities are necessary when working with students, but educator feedback is just as important when it comes to student success. Knight et al. (2020) emphasize, “Feedback allows [educators] to reflect on what they have done and how they can improve, addressing the gap between their performance and their . . . expectations. Formative feedback encourages [educators] to focus on improvement and outcomes.” (p. 142). School superintendents can take steps to make it mandatory for school administrators to complete a set number of walk-through evaluations per week and provide teacher feedback. When a consistent protocol is set for observations and educator feedback, school districts can ensure ongoing communication is centered around student success.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on findings discussed in Chapter 4, opportunities for future research exist

regarding administrators' experiences hiring alternative certified teachers in Texas. Of the 15 email inquiries, seven participants (46.67%) provided consent (see Appendix E) and agreed to participate in the survey, individual interview, and narrative inquiry response protocol. This study can be expanded to a larger more diverse population such as participants who are administrators at the elementary level. In addition, participants from a variety of Texas school districts can be incorporated into the study.

Participants of this study are all secondary administrators. There is currently a teacher shortage in hard to fill math, science, special education, bilingual language areas in Grades K–12. Future research can analyze the experiences of administrators at both grade levels. Elementary administrators' experiences in Grades K–5 will add to the research of hiring teachers who take an alternative route to certification. With the rapid growth in alternative routes to certification, this group of participants can provide opportunities to hire more high-quality teacher candidates also at the elementary level.

Additionally, the study only utilized participants in one Texas school district. Future research may analyze the experiences of administrators from other school districts across the state of Texas. The results in Chapter 4 reveal information from three different instruments. The individual interview protocol includes 20 open-ended questions. Future research might benefit from narrowing down the number of interview questions and utilizing just the individual interview protocol. Based on the data, the study can benefit from developing triangulation with different focus groups while utilizing administrators from other school districts.

Observations

This study highlights the experiences across secondary administrators with different backgrounds. Secondary administrators share professional and personal experiences with hiring

alternative certified teachers. They are transparent about their point of view on alternative certified teachers' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the administrators' input provides insight about their experiences with alternative certified teachers when it comes to teacher performance, which can be used when hiring high-quality alternative certified teachers for all scholars.

Through the data analysis, discussion of findings, and significance of findings for practice, this researcher is amazed by the correlation of the conceptual framework and the administrator experiences with alternative certified teachers. Although administrators are responsible for the hiring, alternative certified teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors play a huge part when it comes to secondary administrators hiring high-quality teachers. The conceptual framework needs to be viewed in its entirety when looking at the correlation between the theory of instruction and hiring high-quality teachers for student achievement.

The phenomenological process of the current study enables secondary administrators' voices to be utilized as data. This methodology provides examples of alternative certified teachers' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, methodology provides information about secondary administrators experiences in a way that was easily conveyed. The current study highlights the importance of reviewing secondary administrators experiences with alternative certified teachers when hiring high-quality teachers for a school district.

Summary

A qualitative phenomenological approach to determine secondary administrators experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers in Texas provides the analysis for this study. The survey, individual interview, and narrative inquiry protocols reveal key findings

related to the research questions. Implications for practice include beneficial approaches such as the use of structured interview protocol, relational trust, and clear expectations for mentoring. Future research may include a larger number of participants to gather information beyond just secondary administrators. Administrator voice is one of the most powerful data sources a researcher and school district may access when evaluating alternative certified teacher quality towards instruction.

APPENDIX A

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SURVEY PROTOCOL

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand administrators' beliefs and experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers. I will begin each survey by informing the interviewee about the study. In addition, an explanation will be provided regarding the privacy of the survey and that responses will be strictly confidential.

Note. If you are using a paper copy of the survey, please circle your answer choice on the first four questions.

1. What is your current school setting?
 - a. Middle School
 - b. High School
2. How many years have you been a certified teacher?
 - a. 0-5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 10-15 years
 - d. 15+ years
3. How many years have you been a secondary administrator?
 - a. 0-5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 10-15 years
 - d. 15+ years
4. Have you ever hired an alternatively certified candidate?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. How would you describe the role and/or responsibilities of the campus principal?
6. What is the purpose of alternative certification programs?
7. What are positive traits do you see in alternative certified teachers?
8. What attributes do alternative certified teachers bring to the school?
9. Out of the content areas: Math, Science, English, Social Studies, or Career Technical Education (CTE), which content area do you feel alternative certified teachers are most knowledgeable at when in the classroom?
10. What pedagogical qualities do alternative certified teachers exhibit?
11. What prevents administrators from hiring alternative certified teachers?

12. How would you rate the level of teacher effectiveness for alternative certified teachers that you have hired during their first year?
- a. Low
 - b. Moderate
 - c. High

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand administrators' beliefs and experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers. I will begin each survey by informing the interviewee about the study. Each administrator will be given a number to state prior to responding verbally to support the transcription process. In addition, an explanation will be provided regarding the privacy of the survey and that responses will be strictly confidential.

Note. The researcher will ask every interviewee for permission to audio record the interview.

1. What are the key components you look for when hiring a teacher? Probing: Do these components look differently if they are from an alternative certification program?
2. What characteristics are most important when hiring an effective alternative certified teacher?
3. When hiring an alternative certified teacher, how many qualities and/or characteristics need to be met before a job offer is made?
4. What pedagogical qualities are necessities for an alternative certified teacher?
5. What recruitment strategies do you use to obtain alternative certified teachers?
6. What resources and/or support do you need when hiring alternative certified teachers?
7. Is there a different process you go through to hire alternative certified teachers? Probing: Are there any problems with these processes?
8. Are there specific alternative certification programs you look for when hiring alternative certified teachers?
9. How often do you evaluate alternative certified teachers work?
10. What areas of reinforcement do alternative certified teacher most often exhibit on their TTESS Evaluation?
11. What areas of refinement do alternative certified teacher most often exhibit on their TTESS Evaluation?
12. What barriers do you encounter when working with alternative certified teachers?
13. How often do you discuss student outcomes when coaching alternative certified teachers?
14. When you meet with an alternative certified teacher you coach, how long are your meetings, typically?

15. How do you determine when an alternative certified teacher has academically impacted student learning?
16. What type of support or training do feel alternative certified teachers need to be successful in the classroom?
17. In what way has District of Innovation contributed to the hiring of alternative certified teachers?
18. What influence if any might an administrator's route to certification have on their decision to hire alternative certified teachers?
19. Compared to traditional certified teachers that you have hired, were you satisfied with alternative certified teachers' performances in their first-year teaching at your campus?
Probing: Where they effective or ineffective?
20. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences with alternative certified teachers that was not covered in this interview?

APPENDIX C
NARRATIVE INQUIRY PROTOCOL

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand administrators' beliefs and experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers. For the narrative story, administrators will be given a prompt to begin telling their story. Administrators will tell their story individually without other administrators in the room and upon hearing the prompt, may ask clarifying questions before beginning. The narrative session will begin by informing administrators about the study and assuring that personal identities, and those of the districts, will remain confidential. Administrators will be identified by a letter and number. (A1, A2, A3, and so forth).

Narrative Prompt: Tell the story of your experiences of becoming a certified teacher. Include from the time you were hired to where you are now. Feel free to share specific experiences, both good and bad.

APPENDIX D

E-MAIL SCRIPT TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear __,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. I am a doctoral student at the University of North Texas. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand administrators' beliefs and experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers. This study will add to the body of knowledge on how the characteristics of alternatively certified teachers can be categorized as an effective high-quality teacher.

Your part in the study will be to participate in providing feedback for content validity. Your anonymity will be protected throughout the process.

If you agree to participate in my research, please reply and we will set up a time and place to meet. At that time, I will give you a detailed consent form. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you, Erikk Bonner

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FOR STUDIES WITH ADULTS

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: Secondary Administrators' Experiences Hiring Alternatively Certified Teachers in Texas

RESEARCH TEAM: Co-Principal Investigator: Erik Bonner, Department of Educational Leadership, Email: Erik.Bonner@unt.edu, Telephone, [REDACTED]. Principal Investigator: Bill Camp, Department of Educational Leadership, Email: Bill.Camp@unt.edu, Telephone, 940-565-2753.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. The investigators will explain the study to you and will answer any questions you might have. It is your choice whether or not you take part in this study. If you agree to participate and then choose to withdraw from the study, that is your right, and your decision will not be held against you. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand administrators' beliefs and experiences when hiring alternative certified teachers. This study will add to the body of knowledge on how the characteristics of alternatively certified teachers can be categorized as an effective high-quality teacher. You may wish to participate in this study if you are a secondary administrator.

You are being asked to take part in a research study about secondary administrators' experiences hiring alternative certified teachers.

Your participation in this research study includes answering a questionnaire, participating in an individual semi-structured interview and narrative protocol session in which you will be asked about your experiences on hiring alternatively certified teachers, including characteristics of a high-quality teacher.

More details will be provided in the next section.

Your part in the study will be to participate in a questionnaire, individual interview, and narrative writing session in which you will be asked about your experiences on hiring alternatively certified teachers, including characteristics of a high-quality teacher. You might want to participate in this study if you are a secondary administrator who is responsible for hiring certified teachers, who is over 18 years of age and currently an employee of the school district. However, you might not want to participate in this study if you don't have time to participate in all three portions of the survey. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and semi-structured interviews via Zoom platform with narrative protocol will take approximately 60-90 minutes.

The foreseeable risks involved in this study are minimal. This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you, but we hope to learn more about secondary administrators' beliefs and experiences hiring alternative certified teachers for high quality teacher effectiveness.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY: Your part in the study will be to participate in a questionnaire, individual semi-structured interview, and narrative protocol session in which you will be asked about your experiences on hiring alternatively certified teachers, including characteristics of a high-quality teacher

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand administrators' experiences with hiring alternatively certified teachers for high quality teacher effectiveness.

TIME COMMITMENT: The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and the semi-structured interviews via Zoom platform with narrative protocol will take approximately 60-90 minutes.

STUDY PROCEDURES: Secondary administrators will be contacted by email and given a questionnaire in paper form to return via email. The questionnaire will be available for three weeks and at the end of the access period, the survey access will be closed, and the data will be analyzed. The survey will include questions about your views on your beliefs of alternative certified teachers. At the conclusion of the questionnaire, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a follow up interview and narrative protocol with Erik Bonner. Follow up interviews and narrative protocol will be randomly selected from participants who complete the questionnaire and indicate willingness to be interviewed on the virtual Zoom platform and be audio recorded.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHY:

- ☐ **I agree** to be audio recorded the research study.
- ☐ **I agree** that the audio recorded can be used in publications or presentations.
- ☐ **I do not agree** that the audio recorded can be used in publications or presentations.
- ☐ **I do not agree** to be audio recorded during the research study.

If you do not agree to be audio recorded, you will not move forward with the research study. The recordings will be kept with other electronic data in a secured locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: The data in this study will be analyzed so that the experiences of secondary administrators hiring alternatively certified teachers can be understood. While many campuses are utilizing alternatively certified teachers, there is little research on how administrators perceive them as a high-quality teacher. This study will add to the body of knowledge on how the characteristics of alternatively certified teachers can be categorized as an effective high-quality teacher.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

Participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured by the research team. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security. If you experience excessive discomfort when completing the research activity, you may choose to stop participating at any time without penalty. The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen, but the study may involve risks to the participant, which are currently unforeseeable. UNT does not provide medical services, or financial assistance for emotional distress or injuries that might happen from participating in this research. If you need to discuss

your discomfort further, please contact a mental health provider, or you may contact the researcher who will refer you to appropriate services or Denton County MHMR crisis hotline at 1-800-762-0157.

COMPENSATION: There is no compensation offered for participation in this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY Efforts will be made by the research team to keep your personal information private, including research study and answered surveys, and disclosure will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. All paper and electronic data collected from this study will be stored in a secure location on the UNT campus and/or a secure UNT server for at least three (3) years past the end of this research in encrypted computer files. The data will be kept on the UNT campus in the PI's office. Research records will be labeled with a code and the master key linking names with codes will be maintained in a separate and secure location.

The results of this study may be published and/or presented without naming you as a participant. The data collected about you for this study may be used for future research studies that are not described in this consent form. If that occurs, an IRB would first evaluate the use of any information that is identifiable to you, and confidentiality protection would be maintained.

While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records, as described here and to the extent permitted by law. In addition to the research team, the following entities may have access to your records, but only on a need-to-know basis: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the FDA (federal regulating agencies), the reviewing IRB, and sponsors of the study.

This research study utilizes a third-party questionnaire service called Transcribe Me!. Please note the Transcribe Me! privacy statement applies to this study. You can review this statement here: <https://www.transcribeme.com/privacy/>

This study also utilizes the third-party software called Zoom and is subject to the privacy policies of Zoom noted here: <https://zoom.us/privacy/>

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY: If you have any questions about the study you may contact Dr. Bill Camp 940-565-2959, Bill.Camp@unt.edu and Erik Bonner, Email: Erik.Bonner@unt.edu. Any questions you have regarding your rights as a research subject, or complaints about the research may be directed to the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, or by email at untirb@unt.edu.

CONSENT:

- Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above.
- You confirm that you have been told the possible benefits, risks, and/or discomforts of the study.

- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study; you also understand that the study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- By signing, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Please sign below if you are at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

***If you agree to participate, please provide a signed copy of this form to the researcher team. They will provide you with a copy to keep for your records.**

Include the following for studies with more than minimal risk, or studies that go to the full board:

For the Principal Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee

Date

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